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ADVENTURES IN
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PG. 59

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STORY: AKERS EDITORIAL



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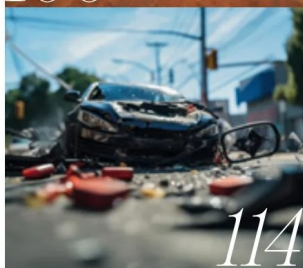


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ON THE COVER



Lake & Sumter Style

Design: Shawnee Coppola
Photo: Nicole Hamel
On the Cover: Alexander Springs



Village Edition

Design: Shawnee Coppola
Photo: Nicole Hamel
On the Cover: Dr. Cook,
Advanced Orthopedics Institute

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Let's step outside

Discover adventure, nature and the heart of our community.

As the weather warms and the days grow longer, there's no better time to step outside and make memories with your loved ones. If you've been searching for ways to get your kids off their electronics and into the fresh air, you're in for a treat with this month's issue. Lake and Sumter counties are overflowing with hidden gems and adventures waiting to be explored, and we're here to help you map out your next family outing.

From hiking scenic trails to kayaking on serene waterways, our spotlight on outdoor adventures has something for everyone. Whether you're an avid outdoor lover or simply looking for family-friendly activities close to home, you'll find plenty of inspiration in these pages. We've covered everything from easygoing picnic spots to thrill-seeker attractions, ensuring that every member of the family has a chance to connect with nature. Who knows? You might just discover your next favorite weekend tradition!

This issue isn't solely dedicated to adventure, though. We also pause to pay tribute to some of our community's most important heroes: our nurses. These incredible individuals work tirelessly to care for us at moments when we need compassion and expertise the most. We are thrilled to celebrate their dedication, resilience and impact in this special feature. Make sure to read their inspiring stories; it's a heartfelt reminder of the power of service and kindness.

At the heart of every story we share is a commitment to celebrating the vibrancy of our Lake and Sumter communities. We hope this issue encourages you to explore what's in your own backyard while also fostering an even greater appreciation for the neighbors and caregivers who make this area so special.

Now, head out, soak up some sunshine and savor every moment. The beauty of the great outdoors and the warmth of a supportive community await you.

Until next month,

Kendra

Kendra



Have a story to tell?

We're always looking for stories about people who live and work in our area.
Send suggestions to editorial@akersmediagroup.com.

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Depression (including treatment-resistant depression)

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Bipolar depression

Panic disorders

Cognitive decline

Brain fog & mental fatigue

Neurological & Pain Management Concerns:

Chronic migraines

Fibromyalgia

Neuropathic pain

Chronic pain syndromes

Post-stroke rehabilitation

Movement disorders (such as Parkinson's disease)

Behavioral & Performance-Related Concerns:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Addiction recovery support

Sleep disorders & insomnia

Low energy & motivation

Focus & concentration issues

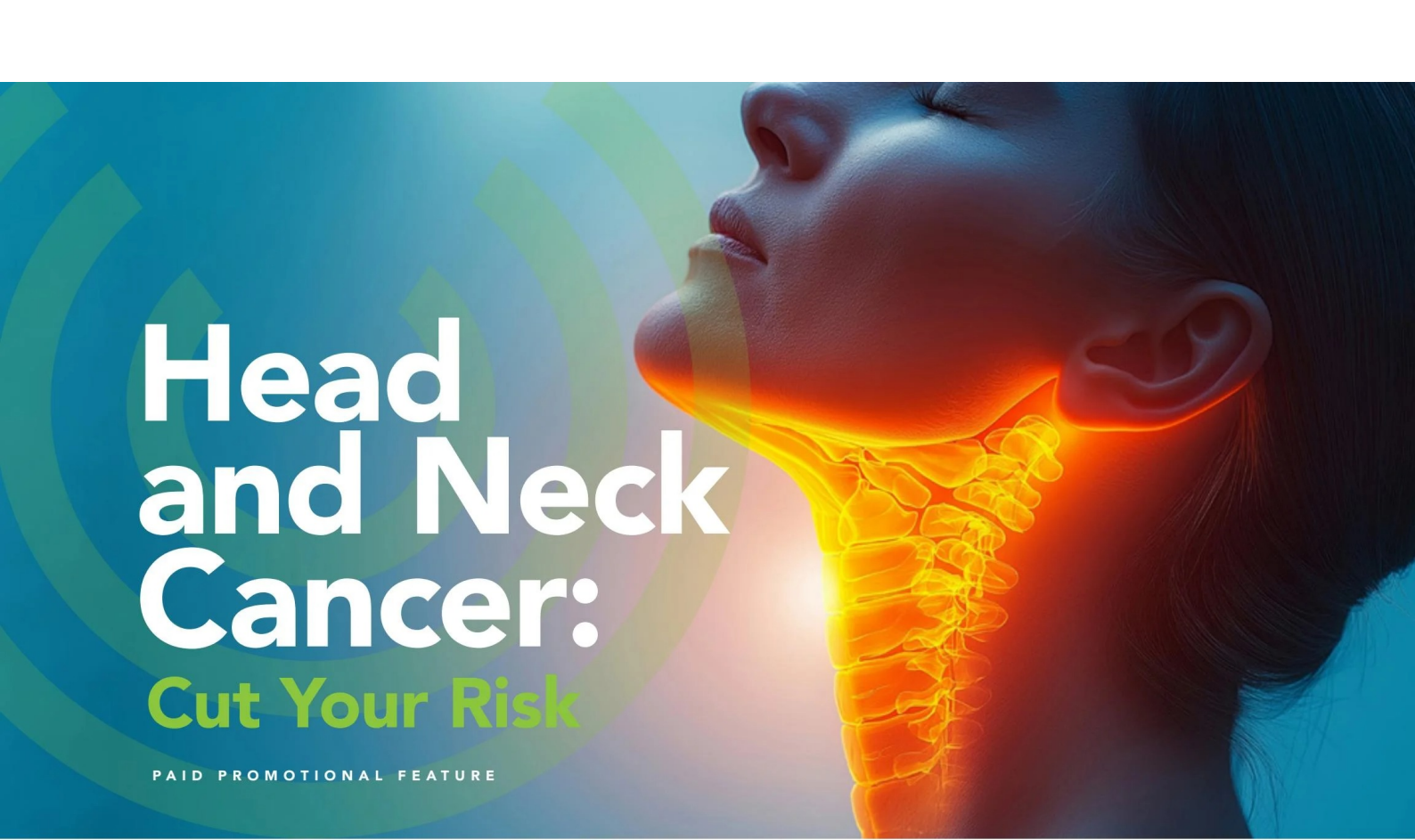
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Head and Neck Cancer:

Cut Your Risk

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Smoking (including secondhand smoke and smokeless tobacco, sometimes called "chewing tobacco" or "snuff") is the largest risk factor for getting head and neck cancer. And people who use both tobacco and alcohol are many times more likely to get head and neck cancer than people with neither habit. Research has also shown that continued smoking by a patient with head and neck cancer may reduce the effectiveness of treatment and increase the chance of a second primary cancer.

RBOI is a member of the Tobacco Free Florida Partnership of Marion County. We support efforts to create tobacco-free environments and smoking cessation and prevention programs, especially those for our youth. Wendy Hall, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Cancer Navigator at RBOI, is also a tobacco cessation specialist. Call her at 352-527-0106 for more information.

Did You Know?

There are five main types of head and neck cancers:

- **Laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancers** occur in and around the voice box.
- **Nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancers** occur behind the nose.
- **Nasopharyngeal cancers** occur at the upper part of the throat behind the nose.

- **Oral and oropharyngeal cancers** occur in the mouth, tongue, and the area from tonsils to voice box.
- **Salivary gland cancers** occur in the mouth glands that produce saliva.

Know your Symptoms

Hoarseness and voice changes can be a sign of head and neck cancer; see your doctor if they do not improve within two weeks. Head and neck cancers can also start away from the vocal cords and produce other symptoms. The most common is swelling or a sore that does not heal. Other symptoms include:

- Persistent sore throat
- Constant coughing
- Pain / difficulty chewing, swallowing, or moving jaw or tongue
- Ear pain / infection
- Trouble breathing
- A lump, bump, or mass in head or neck
- A red or white patch in the mouth
- Foul mouth odor not explained by hygiene
- Persistent nasal obstruction / congestion
- Frequent nosebleeds and / or unusual discharge
- Double vision
- Numbness / weakness in the head and neck region

- Blood in saliva or phlegm
- Loosening teeth
- Dentures no longer fit
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue

How Does Radiation Treat Head and Neck Cancer?

Radiation therapy can be used to treat laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancers in several ways:

- As the main treatment for some early stage cancers. If the tumor is small, radiation can often destroy it without the need for surgery.
- To treat patients too sick for surgery
- To destroy small areas of cancer that might remain after surgery
- To treat returning cancer (recurrence)
- To ease symptoms of advanced laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer, such as pain, bleeding, trouble swallowing, and problems caused when cancer spreads to the bones, as part of palliative care.

Before beginning radiation therapy for any type of head and neck cancer, see an oncologic dentist or oral oncologist. Damaged teeth may need to be removed.



by the numbers

58,450

New diagnoses of oral cavity and pharynx cancers in the US estimated for 2024



1%

Average annual rate of increase in new oral cavity and pharynx cancer cases over 2012–2021



64

Median age of oral cavity and pharynx cancer diagnoses in the US



2.67x

Head and neck cancers are more than 2.5 times as common among men as they are among women

The HPV Connection: Get Vaccinated!

Human papillomavirus (HPV), the most common sexually transmitted virus in the US, has played an increasing role in head and neck cancers, especially oropharyngeal cancers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HPV is thought to cause 60% to 70% of oropharyngeal cancers in the US.

The CDC recommends HPV vaccination for 11- to 12-year-olds, and for everyone through age 26 who has not been vaccinated. Adults age 27 through 45 are encouraged to speak with their doctor about their risk of HPV infection and the possible benefits of vaccination.



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HEY BATTER,

BATTER:

April marks MLB's opening day, once a big deal in Leesburg when Venetian Gardens hosted Spring Training for the Phillies and Pirates and housed minor league teams from 1937 to 1967. The city was home to the Leesburg Gondoliers, Anglers, Packers, Dodgers, Lakers, Braves, Orioles, and the 1966 Florida State League Champion Leesburg Athletics. Since 2007, the Leesburg Lightning has kept the American Pastime alive in the Florida Collegiate Summer League.

NAMASTE: April is National Stress Awareness Month and one way to manage stress is by practicing Yoga. This mindful exercise blends breathing and awareness with stretching. Find a yoga class near you.

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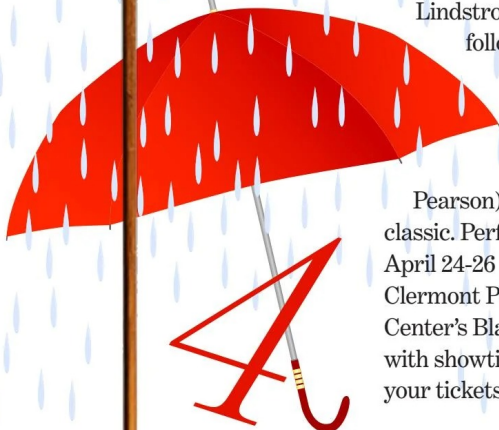
BLOCKING THE WAY: Have you ever wondered where the name "turnpike" for our toll roads came from? According to information found online, turnpikes were originally private roads in England that were literally guarded by men with pikes—long sticks that blocked passage—who would bar entrance until the toll was paid. After payment, the guards would turn their pikes aside and let motorists pass.

3



OLDIE BUT GOODIE:

The Lake-Sumter State College Digital and Performing Arts Program is thrilled to present its spring musical: Singin' in the Rain! Under the direction of Program Director Aspacia Lindstrom, the show follows the lives of Don Lockwood (Dylan Vanlandingham) and Kathy Selden (Hannah Pearson) in this beloved classic. Performances run April 24-26 and May 1-3 at the Clermont Performing Arts Center's Blackbox Theatre, with showtimes at 6pm. Get your tickets now!



4



5

LIFE IN LOW LIGHT: Having plants in your workplace boosts happiness and health by increasing humidity, improving air quality and removing pollutants like benzene and formaldehyde. Studies have shown plants reduce stress, enhance productivity, provide inspiration and help people overcome creative blocks. Plants also add bright colors and pleasant scents to stimulate your senses. Patty Gruber, owner of Cottage Garden in Wildwood, suggests these beneficial indoor-friendly plants:

- Peperomia
- Parlor Palm
- Red Chinese Evergreen
- English Ivy
- Snake Plant
- Any succulent
- Pothos



HONK HONK: The Florida Sandhill crane is a striking, year-round resident of Lake and Sumter counties that's easily recognized by its tall stature and distinctive red crown. These beautiful birds that are protected under the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act can be heard honking in the skies or while crossing the street in pairs so be careful! Mating for life, they return annually to the same nesting sites, where they lay eggs on floating vegetation in shallow waters.



7 RAISING FUNDS FOR A PURPOSE:

Congratulations to Grassy Lake Elementary School in Clermont for being the top fundraiser among Central Florida schools for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society in 2024. Second-grade teacher Shelli Mora has promoted the program at Grassy Lake for at least 15 years. Together, Grassy Lake families and employees have raised more than \$70,000 over the years. Ms. Mora accepted an award on behalf of the school. On Facebook, Lake County Schools commented: "What an amazing achievement!"



SOMETHING OLD, SOME THINGS NEW:

Webster, the oldest incorporated town in Sumter County (1855), has long been a center for agriculture and trade. Home to Florida's largest and oldest flea market, the Sumter County Farmers Market, Webster has been drawing visitors since its establishment in 1937. What began as a simple farm trading post has grown into a bustling 40+-acre marketplace featuring antiques, collectibles, fresh produce, and more. Many local farm families continue to sell homegrown goods, preserving Webster's rich agricultural legacy. Open Saturdays for produce and Mondays for the flea market. 524 N. Market Blvd. / 352.793.2021 / sumtercountymarket.com

9 SMARTY PANTS:

Lake Minneola High is now an AVID National Demonstration School. LMHS admins and teachers will share best practices with schools around the country on how to implement the college and career readiness program. Way to go, Hawks!



EGGS-ELLENT: Easter eggs symbolize new life and rebirth, aligning with both ancient pagan traditions of renewal and the Christian celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Just as the egg's shell represents the tomb and its cracking signifies new beginnings, the quality of an egg reflects its origins. Pasture-raised hens are free to roam and forage naturally so they produce nutrient-rich eggs with vibrant yolks and thick shells. Choosing pasture-raised eggs not only supports better nutrition and sustainability but also honors the deeper symbolism of renewal and a more natural way of life. For the best locally grown eggs, visit *Lorena's Farm Fresh Eggs* / 8200 Florida Boys Ranch Rd., Groveland / 407.765.5885. To order locally grown, farm fresh organic eggs for delivery, go to FloridaFarmDirect.com. 🐣



Before Lakeridge: I worked in public accounting as an auditor in Omaha, Nebraska for three years following college before coming on board with the winery in April 2022.

Community boards/committees I sit on: Vice Chair of the Viticulture Advisory Committee (VAC – State of Florida), VP of the Florida Wine and Grape Growers Association (FWGGA), board member of Lake County Tourist Development Council (TDC).

Lakeridge duties: Every day is different at the winery! I oversee operations and day-to-day activities. Additionally, I spend a good amount of time in the vineyard, solving problems, assisting any of my managers and ensuring all operations are running as smoothly and optimally as possible.

Why visit Lakeridge Winery?: Who doesn't love free wine tours and tastings? Situated on 127 acres in the rolling hills of Clermont, Lakeridge is a third-generation, family-owned gem that has been a part of Lake County for over 35 years. We are proud to be the largest winery in the State of Florida and produce many award-winning wines.

Most rewarding part of my job: Seeing our customers smile, laugh and enjoy themselves. There is something about being a part of something that brings enjoyment to so many. My grandad started this winery with five acres planted in his backyard over 40 years

ago, so to carry on that legacy and provide these experiences to our customers is amazing.

One of my biggest achievements: I feel honored being able to carry on the family legacy here at the winery. To date, Lakeridge has won over 1,000 awards on our wines, with more to come. We are truly dedicated to producing the best product possible for our customers.

Best advice I would give my younger self: Don't get so caught up on the small things, and trust your instinct. It's so much easier said than done, but sometimes we get wrapped up in things that, in the long run, really don't matter. Slow down, enjoy and trust in yourself!

Outside of work: I enjoy spending time with my lovely wife, Jaisa, and dog, Millie, golfing, playing tennis or pickleball, and most of all, traveling.

Favorite wine pairings: Lakeridge Winery's Napa Cabernet Sauvignon with any cut of red meat. Our Sparkling Pink Crescendo with popcorn (Trust me). Our Cream Sherry Dessert wine poured over any sort of white cake and ice cream.

Words to live by: "Hard work happens when no one is watching."

Top song on my playlist: "Summer Wine" by Lee Hazlewood and Nancy Sinatra. 🎶

PEOPLE

Christian Slupe

Founder's grandson keeps Lakeridge Winery's legacy flowing.

STORY: ROXANNE BROWN × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL

VITAL STATS

- Lakeridge Winery and Vineyards COO, Seavin, Inc. VP
- Bachelor of Science in accounting/minor in coaching, Midland University
- Lives in Minneola
- Originally from Littleton, CO



Know a person of interest? Tell us! → Email your recommendation to roxanne@akersmediagroup.com.



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PEOPLE

AMBER VAN ROOYEN

Steer clear, this South Lake High junior is taking the competition by the horns.

STORY AND PHOTO: CINDY PETERSON

My passion for animals was sparked when: I began riding horses at the age 7 and never stopped. Right now, I train with Olympian Karl Slezak, who's on the Canadian team. I also work at his barn, Spruce Stable South, and they've made the biggest difference in my career.

I was inspired to start showing cattle when: My friend convinced me to sign up for the senior chapter steer competition last year. I ended up showing at the Lake County Fair, doing both show and sale, and I absolutely loved it. After that, I contacted a family friend in the cattle industry, and he helped me find a steer from his own herd. That's how my brother and I got Cash and Jack, our steers we are showing this year.

My love for agriculture: I've always been a huge believer in agriculture and how important it is. I think a lot of youth don't appreciate it enough. There's so much work that goes into taking care of these animals—keeping their pastures nice, making sure they have hay, keeping them clean. It's a big industry that I

wish more people understood and appreciated.

Working with animals has helped me: Develop a strong work ethic. No one cares if you didn't sleep or didn't eat—you have to take care of the animals first. I've learned that you just have to keep working hard. My involvement in showing and working at my family friend's ranch has had a huge impact on my life.

In the future: I want to go into commercial real estate, but I also want to be an equine chiropractor. It's something I've been interested in since I was 8 or 9.

For fun: I like working with trucks and helping my parents with their storage facility. I also work at my boss's facility, helping feed horses and maintain the property. When I do have time, I like hanging out with friends and grabbing a bite to eat.

My favorite restaurant is: Mi Tierra in Mascotte. It's a little taco stand. I always get five lengua (tongue) tacos. 🌮

VITAL STATS

- 17 years old
- Steer showman at the Lake County Fair
- Dressage equestrian

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CINDY PETERSON



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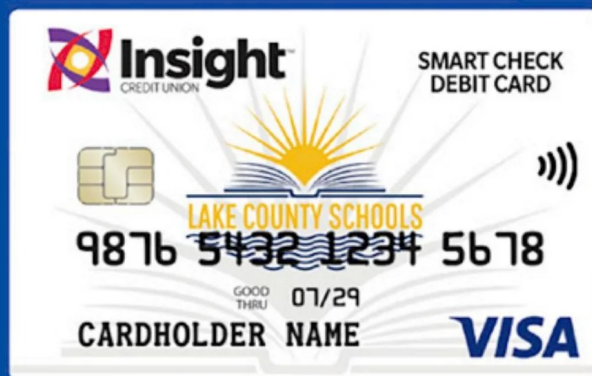
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RESTORING MOBILITY, RECLAIMING LIFE



**AdventHealth
Waterman's orthopedic
experts are here to get
you back on your feet.**

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

For many, movement is life. Whether it's cycling up a hill, shooting hoops with friends, or simply chasing grandkids across the park, the ability to move freely is something we often take for granted—until pain and injury take it away. At AdventHealth Waterman, the orthopedic team is dedicated to helping patients regain strength, mobility and confidence through world-class treatments and compassionate care.

A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

As the first and only hospital in Lake County to receive the Joint Commission-certified Gold Seal of Approval for Knee and Hip Replacement, AdventHealth Waterman stands at the forefront of orthopedic excellence. From advanced diagnostic imaging to minimally invasive procedures and comprehensive rehabilitation, the team is committed to ensuring patients receive the best care possible.

Dr. Matthew Villani, the newest addition to the orthopedic team at AdventHealth Waterman—specializing on the feet and ankles—emphasizes the hospital's dedication to innovation.

"We are on the cutting edge and constantly evolving our techniques and technologies that come out on the market to ensure the best outcomes for our patients," says Dr. Villani. "Our goal is not just to fix a problem, but to restore our

patients' quality of life so they can get back to doing what they love."

ADVANCED DIAGNOSTICS FOR ACCURATE TREATMENT PLANS

Identifying the root cause of pain is the first step toward recovery. At AdventHealth Waterman, state-of-the-art imaging technology such as MRIs, CT scans, ultrasounds, and bone scans allow specialists to diagnose a range of conditions with precision. Whether it's a sports injury, arthritis, or a degenerative condition, the orthopedic team works swiftly to determine the best course of action for each patient.

"Our advanced imaging capabilities allow us to pinpoint issues early and create targeted treatment plans which leads to better outcomes," Dr. Villani says.

PERSONALIZED TREATMENT AND CUTTING-EDGE SURGICAL TECHNIQUES

Orthopedic care at AdventHealth Waterman is never a one-size-fits-all approach. The hospital offers a full spectrum of treatment options, from conservative therapies and non-surgical approaches like PRP injections and nerve stimulators for neuropathy to groundbreaking surgical procedures using robotics and more.

"We take care of anything with the muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments, things like that," adds Dr. Villani.

Dr. Donald Perry, a highly regarded orthopedic specialist at the hospital, highlights the importance of individualized care. "Every patient is unique, and so is their path to healing," he says. "Some may benefit from therapy and non-surgical interventions, while others may require joint replacement. Our job is to provide the best option for each individual and get them back to their daily activities."

For patients in need of surgery, AdventHealth offers advanced procedures like joint replacements, joint fusions, deformity correction, rotator cuff surgery and muscle sparing surgery, one of Dr. Perry's specialties.

"A lot of times these are the little things that people don't necessarily notice but when you do muscle sparing surgery, and I do it exclusively, is that you don't damage the muscle so it's typically a faster recovery and it's less painful," says Dr. Perry.

COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION AND RECOVERY SUPPORT

Recovery is just as crucial as the procedure itself. That's why AdventHealth Waterman provides an integrated rehabilitation program designed to help patients regain strength, flexibility and confidence in their movement. The hospital's inpatient and outpatient rehab services include physical therapy, pain management and post-surgical recovery guidance.

"We have a full line of physicians and facilities, and we all work together," Dr. Villani says.

To support patients undergoing joint replacement,

AdventHealth Waterman offers free pre-surgical education classes that highlight what to expect before, during and after surgery.

"We believe in empowering our patients with knowledge," says Dr. Perry. "When they know what to expect and how to take care of themselves after surgery, their recovery is often faster and more successful."

WHOLE-PERSON HEALING

At AdventHealth Waterman, orthopedic care extends beyond physical healing. The hospital's Orthopedic Care Navigator serves as a guide for patients throughout their journey, answering questions, coordinating appointments and ensuring a seamless care experience.

"Our multidisciplinary team is here to support patients physically, emotionally and spiritually," says Dr. Villani. "Mobility isn't just about movement—it's about independence and quality of life."

LIVE THE LIFE YOU LOVE

Whether you're dealing with chronic joint pain, a sports injury or the effects of aging, AdventHealth Waterman's orthopedic specialists are here to help you move freely again. With advanced technology, expert surgeons and a compassionate support team, healing is within reach.

If you're ready to take the first step toward pain-free movement, schedule an appointment today.

"Our goal is helping people get back to their daily living as quickly as possible," Dr. Perry says.

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ORTHOPEDIC SPINE SURGEON



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OFF THE BEATEN PATH

STORIES: AKERS STAFF
PHOTOS: AKERS STAFF AND PROVIDED



Outdoor adventures await when you leave the city behind.

STORY: CYNTHIA MCFARLAND
PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL,
MATTHEW GAULIN AND PROVIDED

Central Florida has earned a well-deserved reputation as a vacation capital. But those who live here know some of the best memories aren't made in theme parks.

If you're ready to leave crowds, concrete and long lines behind, we've rounded up an array of memory-making opportunities that make great day trips or afternoon escapes. These outdoor adventures and hands-on activities will have you asking, "Why didn't I do this before?!"

Showcase of Citrus

What started as a roadside citrus stand has become one of Central Florida's biggest outdoor adventure options, drawing well over 200,000 visitors annually.

The Arnold family has produced citrus on the land since the early 1960s and John Jr. opened the farm's retail outlet in 1989.

"John and I wanted to have a place where families could get away from the pressures of the outside world and have a taste of real Florida. We want to keep that off-the-beaten-path vibe," says Tara Boshell, farm manager and John's "better half."

Showcase of Citrus offers a variety of activities in a natural setting enhanced by farm collectibles, including numerous antique tractors.

"Families can come on any budget to get outside and let the kids play

while their parents relax and have a beer or glass of wine," says Tara. "A lot of people think they're just going to come for an hour but end up staying for hours."

The Monster Truck Adventure takes guests on a 45–55-minute excursion through citrus groves, native woodlands, pasture and the exotic animal area.

The farm is a licensed wildlife exhibitor. What started with one zebra in 2017 has expanded to a whole herd of exotics, such as bison, Asian water buffalo, camel, ostriches, emus, black buck antelope, capybara and kangaroos.

At the farm animal section, you can pet friendly critters through the fence and buy a bucket of animal treats to feed them.

Kids dig into a literal geology lesson at the Gem Mine. They'll get a bag with several pounds of ore to sift through in a real sluice box. The hidden gemstones and other treasures (shells, shark's teeth, fossils, etc.) they uncover are theirs to take home.

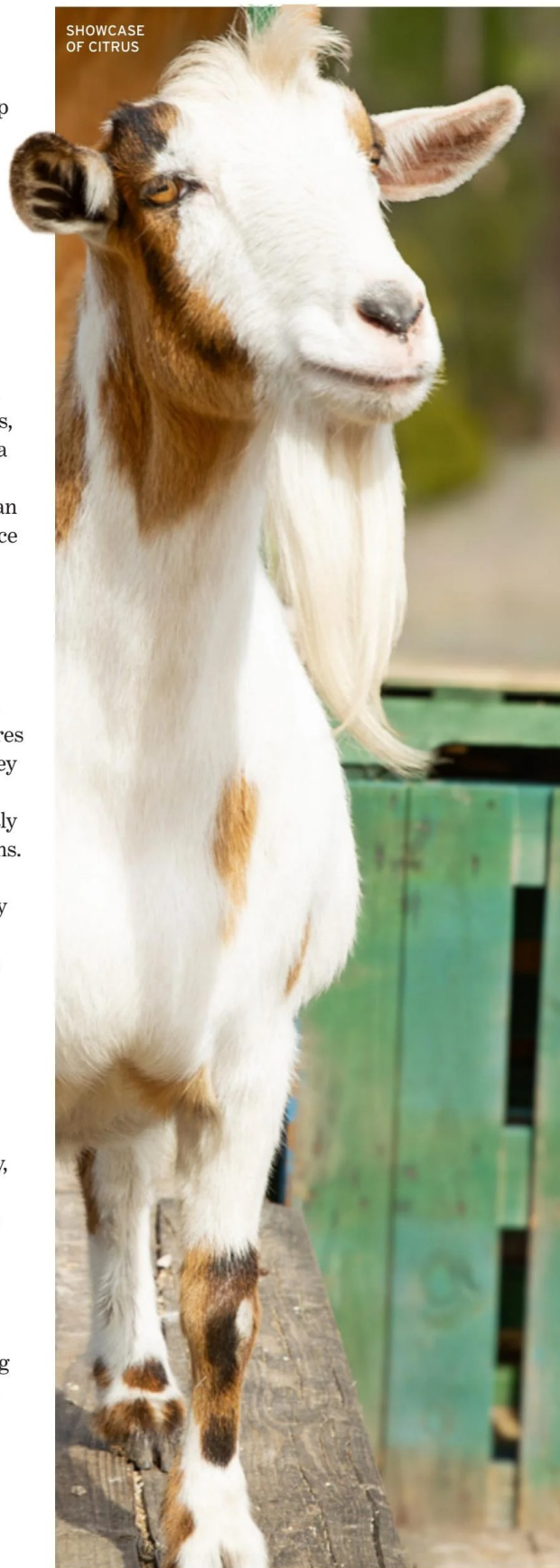
Food trucks and the farm's recently opened kitchen offer plenty of options. Adults will appreciate the private label fruit-based wines. Find a comfy spot to hang out or sit on a saddle at the bar and indulge in the famous creamsicle treat—an all-natural orange juice slushy layered with vanilla frozen yogurt.

Stroll through the Old Time Country Store to find locally made, small batch items, including jams, jellies, BBQ sauces, dressings, honey, soaps, Florida souvenirs and more. If that's not enough, there is a space that can be rented for weddings and private parties and where line dancing and other classes and shows take place.

There are no admission or parking fees, and the playground is free. Pay only for the activities you choose. Reservations suggested for the Monster Truck Adventure.

*Open every day of the year from 9am-7pm
showcaseofcitrus.com*

SHOWCASE
OF CITRUS



Stanley Pond Adventure Farm

Fun family interaction. That was the mission when Stanley Pond Adventure Farm opened in 2005--and it still is.

"This is a place for families to come and play together. My idea was if they play together there's a better chance of them staying together," says the farm's owner who is known to everyone as Sunflower Bob.

Making memories outdoors is easy at Stanley Pond, which features an array of activities in the Fun Zone. There's Jack's Jumping Pillow and 50-foot-long Suzi's Super Slide and a splash pad featuring 20 fountains.

The Tricycle Track isn't just for kids. These trikes are sturdy enough for adults to ride and Bob says some of the best races are when moms and dads compete.

Visitors of all ages enjoy the basketball toss, which features baskets at 15 different heights.

Stanley Pond is also a premier largemouth bass fishing facility. Bring your own bait and tackle for catch-and-release fishing in the two stocked ponds.

"We're getting parents and their kids coming to fish, and you don't have to pay for an extra fishing license; we take care of all that," says Bob.

Everything in the Fun Zone is included with your \$15 entry fee. Admission even includes a glass vase for any sunflowers and zinnias you pick and take home.

"We're the only year-round u-pick sunflower farm in the country. We have 15 different colors of ornamental sunflowers," says Bob, of the fields which make for fabulous photos.

Visitors are amazed they can pick sunflowers in the winter, but Bob explains that year-round weekly planting makes this possible.

Stanley Pond is popular for birthday parties, home school groups, family reunions, even small weddings and celebrations. The 23-acre adventure farm is open every weekend and by appointment during the week. There's no required

minimum number of guests. "If I get a call from one dad to come with his kid, I'll open," says Bob.

Saturdays 10am-4pm

Sundays 12 noon-4pm

Weekdays by appointment. Just call.

stanleypondfarm.com

www.facebook.com/StanleyPond

Sunsational Farms

Rich in history, Sunsational Farms dates to the 1970s when it was a citrus grower and packing house owned by the Faryna family. In 2019, the Farynas teamed up with longtime friends, the Bakers, to open an agri-tourism farm.

From family outings to field trips and special events, Sunsational Farms invites visitors of all ages to enjoy the welcoming country atmosphere featuring their Country Store, kids' play area, barn, Big Orange Grill, and festivals throughout the year. The casual setting allows adults to sit and



MONSTER TRUCK
ADVENTURE AT
SHOWCASE OF CITRUS



STANLEY POND
ADVENTURE FARM



SUNSATIONAL FARMS



relax, while kids have ample room to run and play.

Many people refer to Sunsational Farms as “The Big Orange,” thanks to the classic roadside memorabilia next to their store, which makes for a great photo-op.

The farm hosts festivals throughout the year, including the Easter Egg Drop, Craft Beer Festival, Chicken Wing Cook-off, and the popular Haunted Trail, which opens for several weeks each fall. (See website for dates.) Most festivals are free to attend and there are no parking fees.

“Depending on the festival, you could find carnival games, bounce houses, face painters, food trucks, a craft market, a farmer’s market, pony rides, monster truck rides and of course, our bee train,” says Brian Faryna.

“We are able to host private events such as birthday parties, reunions, corporate events, weddings, showers and more under our open barn that can seat 200 people,” says Bill Baker. “There are plenty of bathrooms, including an ADA accessible facility.”

Burgers, cheesesteaks, chicken sandwiches, wraps, salads and more are served at The Big Orange Grill, the farm’s food truck in the barn.

The farm sells seasonal fresh produce, including lettuces, tomatoes, broccoli, and strawberries grown hydroponically. In the fall, mini-pumpkins are available as a u-pick crop.

Kids and adults love getting their favorite sweet treats, including creamsicle ice cream made with real orange juice and strawberry shakes made with farm-grown strawberries. Another big hit is the fresh squeezed orange juice, made from locally picked oranges and squeezed at the farm.

To book a reservation, call the store, email, or message them on Facebook. Open Tuesday through Friday 11am-6pm and Saturdays 11am-4pm. sunsationalfarms.com

LAKE & SUMTER COUNTIES OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Choosing your next adventure is where the fun starts. Ready, set, go!

SHOWCASE OF CITRUS

15051 Frank Jarrell Rd.
Clermont
352.394.4377
showcaseofcitrus.com

STANLEY POND

15426 CR 48, Astatula
321.228.7608
stanleypondfarm.com

SUNSATIONAL FARMS

40541 Roger Giles Road
Umatilla
352.771.2013
@sunsationalfarms
sunsationalfarms.com
contact@sunsationalfarms.com

LUNASEA ALPACA FARM

18810 Lone Dove Lane
Clermont
352.223.9457
lunaseaalpacafarm.com

SOUTHERN HILLS FARM

16651 Schofield Rd, Clermont
407.986.5806
southernhillfarms.com

CATBOAT ESCAPES

10354 Cypress Cove Lane
Clermont
321.234.2875
catboatescapes.com

HORSEBACK RIDING AT LAKE LOUISA STATE PARK

7305 US 27, Clermont
352.503.4489
lakelouisastatepark.com

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Country store: 352.303.1550
Office: 352.748.2085
brownandbrownfarms.com

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352.383.6900
longandscottfarms.com

UNCLE DONALD'S FARM

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352.753.2882
north-florida-family-fun-guide.com/
uncle-donalds-farm

ADVENTURE OUTDOOR PADDLE

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352.217.5012
adventureoutdoorpaddle.com

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mountdoracarriageco.com

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Center & Marina
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glideadventuretours.com

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8222A CR 48, Yalaha
352.324.4069
yalahabootleggingco.com





OCALA
NATIONAL
FOREST

HAPPY TRAILS

The hills are alive with paths for hiking.

STORY: GINA HORAN
PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL

Central Florida is full of natural beauty, countless lakes and lush landscapes, but what surprises many visitors and newcomers is the elevation. Nestled among the

famous waterways are rolling hills, scenic trails and a variety of terrain that make this a great spot for both casual strolls and more challenging hikes.

Along the western shore of Lake Apopka and stretching across Lake and Sumter counties, a vast network of trails invites outdoor lovers to explore the area year-round. Towns like Clermont, Mount Dora and Howey-in-the-Hills add a little extra elevation to the hiking experience in Lake County, while Sumter County offers its own charms. The trails around Lake Panasoffkee wind through wetlands, oak hammocks and open prairies, making for a

quiet, nature-filled escape. Whether you're looking for a quick walk or an all-day trek, there's a local trail here waiting to be explored.

Lake County

Sugarloaf Mountain, the fifth-highest named point in Florida and the most prominent on the peninsula, is 312 feet above sea level and is a rewarding challenge for hikers. Nestled in Lake County near Clermont, it also provides sweeping views and a taste of elevation rarely found in the state.

At the lush Forest Gateway from Umatilla to Astor, a different slice

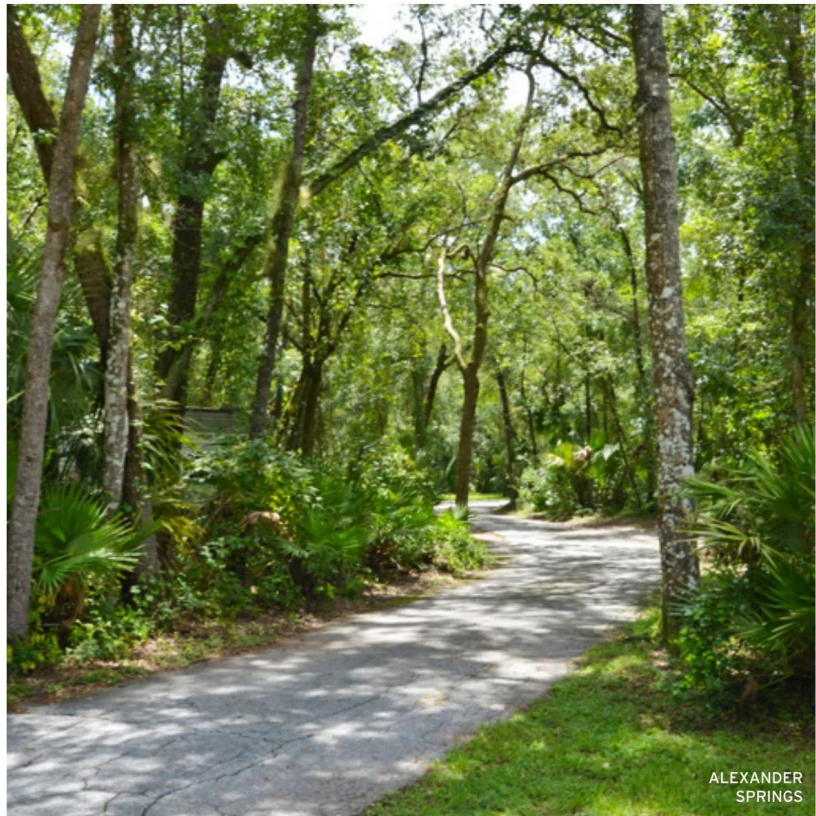
of Florida's wilderness lies within the Ocala National Forest at the northern end of the county. Here, nature showcases towering pines, cypress swamps and crystal-clear springs.

The Clearwater Lake Loop Trail near Paisley is the birthplace of the Florida Trail, which is marked by a historic sign at the trailhead. This scenic path blazed in 1966 winds through longleaf pine forests, wet prairies and scrubby flatwoods, connects hikers to Alexander Springs, which is one of Florida's 27 first-magnitude springs and boasts pristine 72-degree waters, a sandy bottom and a lush forest backdrop.

Alexander Run serves as a gateway to the Florida National Scenic Trail, with routes leading to Clearwater Lake and Farles Lake for backpackers. The Timucuan Trail, a short loop, features boardwalks through palm hammocks and observation decks overlooking the spring run.

A bit more to the south in Eustis, Trout Lake Nature Center offers short and mostly shaded habitats. Some trails have footbridges over wet areas, while a boardwalk leads over the marsh to the edge of Trout Lake and the Education Dock.

If you walk quietly on the wide, mulched trails, you may spot turtles, raccoons or even bobcats. Hidden throughout the trails are six raccoon and fox statues, regularly moved to encourage exploration. Seasonal activities include scavenger hunts and fairy house searches. Trail maps are available at kiosks near the main parking lot and Grandfather Oak.



RECREATION AREAS AND NATURE CENTERS IN LAKE COUNTY WITH NEARBY TRAILS

- Clearwater Lake Recreation Area: The first trailhead of the Florida Trail, featuring a scenic tree tunnel. 24511 CR 42, Paisley / 352.669.0078
- Alexander Springs Recreation Area: Offers a boardwalk, picnic area, bathhouse and tent camping. 49525 CR 445, Altoona / 352.669.3522
- Lake Dorr Recreation Area: A scenic retreat for RV camping, cabin rentals and boating. 19331 Dorrwood Ln., Altoona 877.444.6777
- Farles Prairie Recreation Area: Access to Farles Lake for boating, birding and fishing. Altoona / 850.523.8500
- Trout Lake Nature Center 520 E. CR 44, Eustis / 352.357.7536

Sumter County

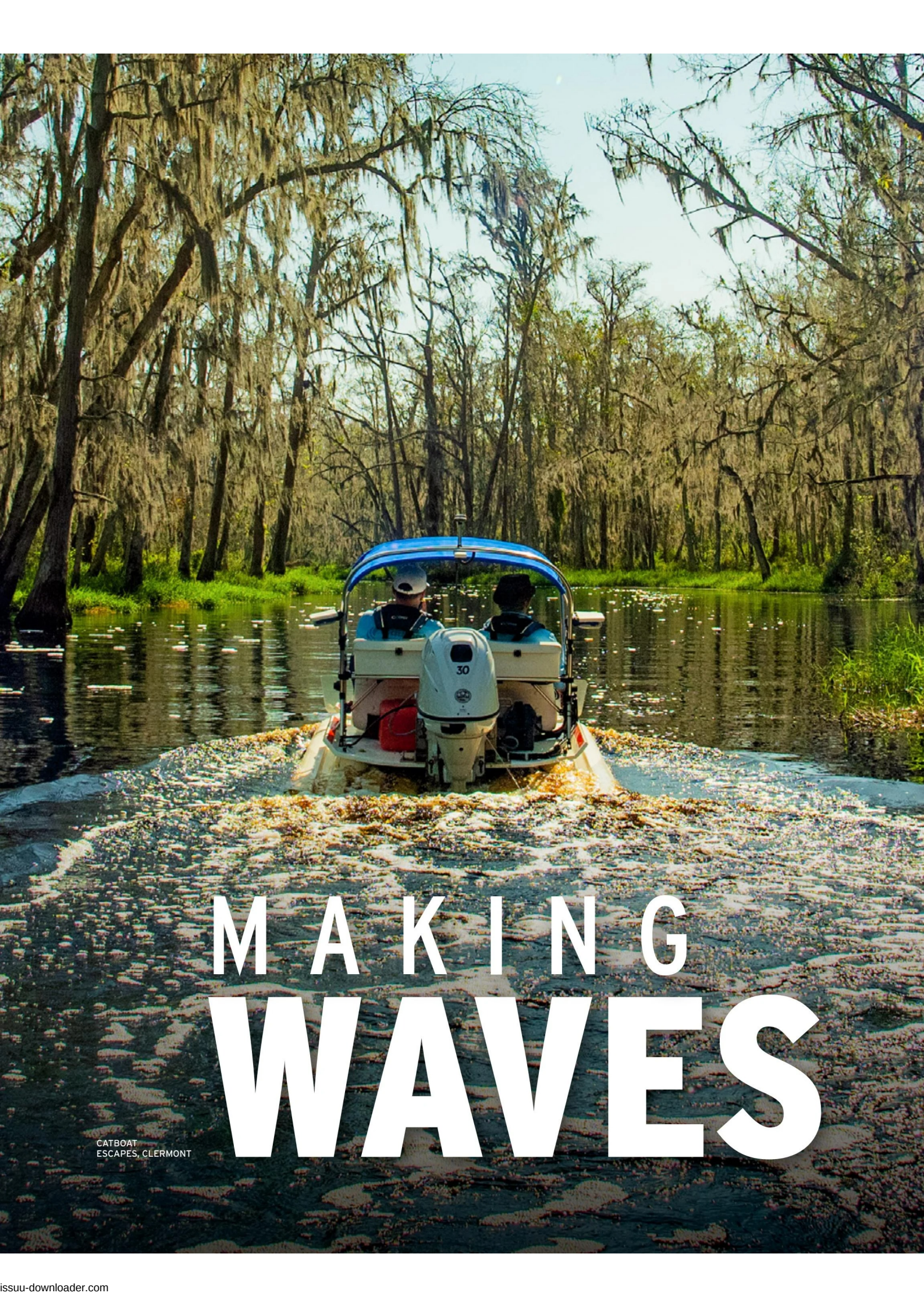
Sumter County offers plenty of opportunities for hiking, with natural wetlands, a rich and

diverse habitat and more than 20 miles of the Florida Trail, including 13.1 miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail. The region boasts scenic woodlands and miles of trails winding through state forests and wildlife management areas, making it a paradise for nature lovers.

The Florida National Scenic Trail offers well-marked routes for hikers of all levels that invite explorers to experience Florida's diverse ecosystems while soaking in the peacefulness of the outdoors. You can take a relaxed stroll beneath towering oaks or dive into a cypress-lined adventure where Sandhill cranes, deer and even an occasional black bear make an appearance.

Sumter County's relatively flat terrain makes it easy for families to enjoy, but there's still plenty of variety in open prairies and shady hammocks. Start the day with a sunrise hike to beat the heat or wander through the quiet in the afternoon to escape into Florida's wild side right in your backyard.





MAKING WAVES

CATBOAT
ESCAPES, CLERMONT

So much water, so many ways to make a splash.

STORY: GINA HORAN
PHOTOS: GINA HORAN
AND NICOLE HAMEL

Lake and Sumter counties are a haven for water enthusiasts, boasting a combined total of over 1,000 lakes and 202 square miles of water in Lake County alone.

This abundance of waterways offers a plethora of activities, from boating and fishing to kayaking and sailing. Whether you're seeking a tranquil paddle or an adrenaline-pumping adventure, the options are as vast as the lakes themselves.

For thrill-seekers craving speed and excitement, we've uncovered two exhilarating experiences that will surely get your heart racing.

Catboat Escapes, Clermont

Nate Crawford has always felt at home on the water, so turning a lake into his office was a dream come true. Running Catboat Escapes in Clermont, he gets to share that passion with people from all over the world.

"I still pinch myself that I get to do this every day," he says. "Being out on the lake isn't just fun, it's a way to ease stress and connect with nature."

With a background in stunts and entertainment, Nate wanted to offer something different from the artificial escapes of theme parks. He believes people crave real connections to the environment, history and each other.

Part slow cruise, part full-throttle adventure, the catboat experience puts you in the driver's seat. Piloting your own two-seater catamaran, you'll skim across the pristine waters of the Clermont Chain of Lakes at speeds up to 30 mph.

The two-hour guided tour starts at Cypress Cove Marina and winds through multiple lakes and rivers. Guests listen via walkie-talkie as Nate shares stories about barefoot skier

Banana George, the Miami Vice house and the Citrus Tower.

Along the way, you'll pass ancient cypress trees draped in Spanish moss and view wildlife like Sandhill cranes, bald eagles, blue herons and the occasional roseate spoonbill. The only gators you'll encounter are in Nate's trivia game, a fun way to test your Florida knowledge over the radio.

While staying dry is an option, the throttle is in your hands. "A little splashing only adds to the fun," Nate says.

Catboat Escapes - 10354 Cypress Cove Ln., Clermont

Tom and Jerry's Airboat Tours, Lake Panasoffkee

If you've ever driven on the turnpike near Lake Panasoffkee, chances are you've seen a sign for the legendary Tom and Jerry's Airboat Tours. Locals have known about Tom and Jerry's for years, but many don't take a tour until they have visitors in town. And without fail, they always say the same thing: "We should have done this sooner."



Jeaneen and Tim Chrisante took over the company last summer and have kept the excitement going with five airboats and tours running on the hour. Captains “Barefoot” Brent, Captain Joe, and Captain Chad take passengers on a ride that’s part thrill, part wildlife documentary.

The boats glide through marshes and canals where regular boats can’t go, offering an up-close view of Florida’s wild side.

“I love everything about it,” Jeaneen says. “Giving people the experience to see the gators is magical because that’s why they come from everywhere in the world.”

Tourists from as far away as Canada chose an airboat ride because they

heard it was the safest way to see gators. came from Montreal just to see the gators and heard the airboat was the best, safest way to get up close in the wild.

There are two juvenile female alligators that live in an enclosure right outside, plus two baby gators inside, all hatched right there on site.

During the winter months, you can spot gators sunning and then slipping into the water just as the airboat passes nearby. In March and April, they come out of hibernation and start actively swimming and hunting.

Airboat tours aren’t just about the alligators, although you’re likely to spot up to 15 on any given ride. The captains also share history, point out

turtles basking in the sun and identify birds like Anhingas drying their wings.

Top-rated on TripAdvisor and U.S. Coast Guard-approved, the airboat experience shows off Florida’s wild, untamed beauty for visitors and locals alike. 🦎

*Tom and Jerry’s Airboat
Tours - 68 North Main
Terrace, Lake Panasoffkee*



TOURS/PILOTED ADVENTURES

CLERMONT

Catboat Escapes
321.234.2875
catboatescapes.com

LAKE PANASOFFKEE

Tom and Jerry’s Airboat Tours
321.689.9821
airboattoursoflorida.com

MOUNT DORA

Premier Boat Tours
352.383.3933
doracanaltour.com

Rusty Anchor

352.383.3933
rustyanchormountdora.com

Catboat Adventure

352.325.1442
catboatadventure.com

TAVARES

Dora Queen
352.533.3380
doraqueen.com

Cruisin’ Tikis

866.845.4386
cruisintikislakedora.com

Native Tours

352.223.1806
captainraysnativetours.com

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justins-jungle.com

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JONES BROTHERS AIR AND SEAPLANE ADVENTURES

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jonesairandsea.com

SEAPLANE TOURS TOUR2SKY

tour2sky.com

WAYS TO WATER ON YOUR OWN

Lake and Sumter counties feature numerous public boat ramps, providing easy access to the water. Visit these websites to find the perfect launch spot for your next adventure.

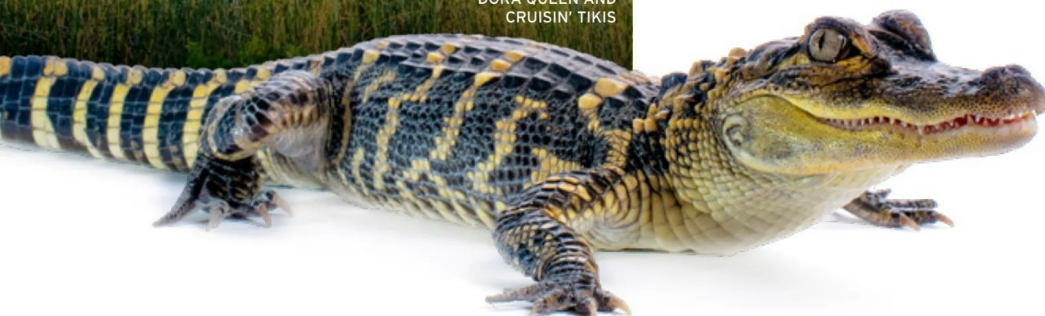
lakecountyfl.gov/parks-and-trails/boat-ramps

discoversumterfl.com/category/things-to-do/01-sporting/boating

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CRUISIN’ TIKIS



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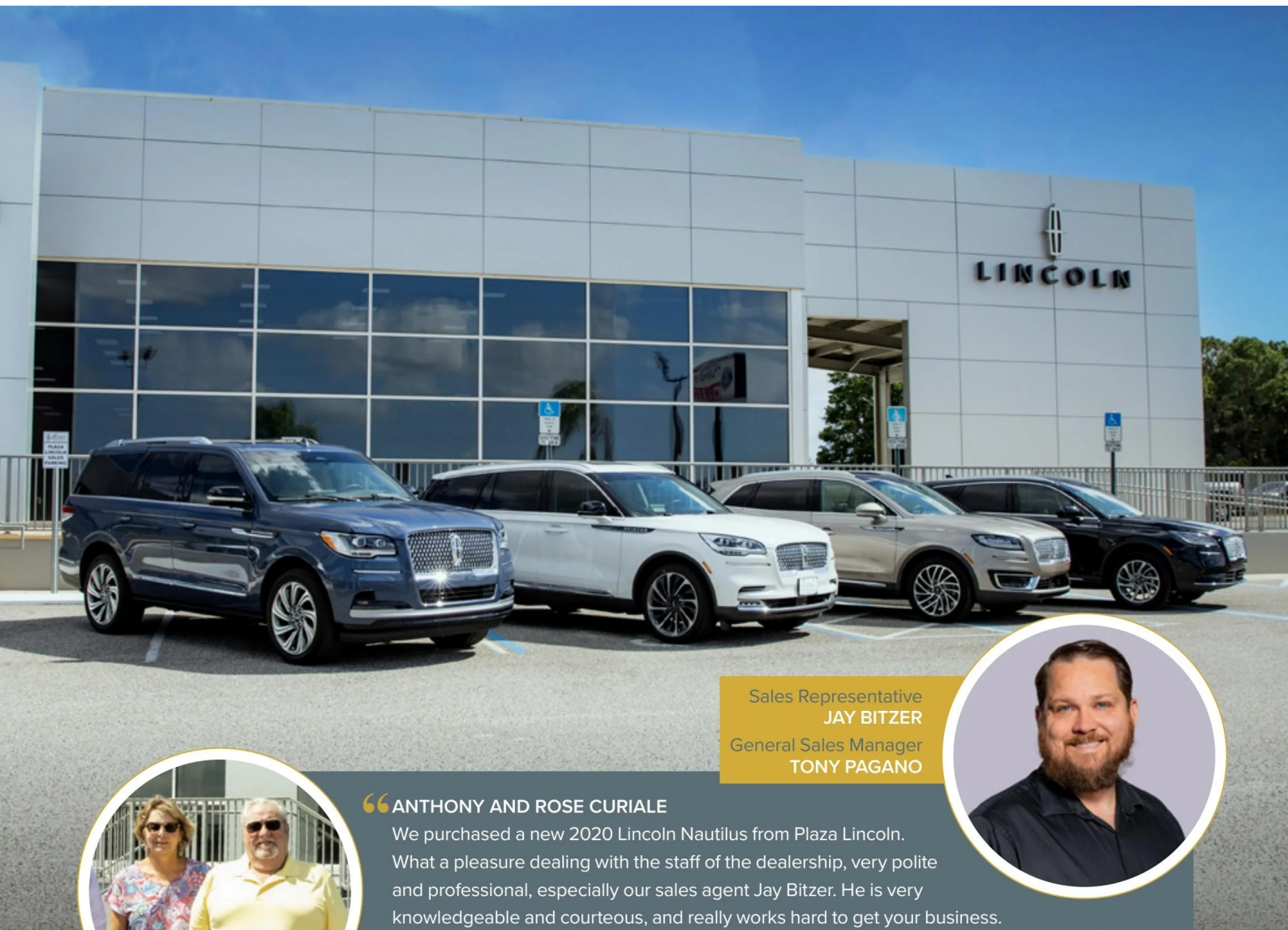
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SCREENS ADVENTURE

From outdoor adventures to creative arts, summer camps inspire kids to thrive.

STORY: CINDY PETERSON × PHOTOS: PROVIDED

As summer approaches, families are looking for ways to keep kids engaged, active and learning outside the classroom. Fortunately, local summer camps offer a wide variety of experiences, from outdoor adventures and sports to creative arts and STEM programs. Whether children are looking to explore nature, develop new skills or deepen their faith, there's a camp for every interest. Here's a look at some of the summer camps available in our community.

Camp Boggy Creek

30500 Brantley Branch Rd., Eustis
boggycreek.org

Camp Boggy Creek is more than just a summer getaway—it's a transformative experience for children facing serious medical conditions. Since its founding in 1996 by actor Paul Newman and General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the camp has provided a medically safe and adventure-filled environment where kids can leave

behind the challenges of their illnesses and embrace the joys of childhood.

Since its opening, the camp has welcomed over 95,000 children and families, offering them a completely cost-free retreat filled with fun, support and a sense of belonging.

Spanning 232 acres, Camp Boggy Creek provides year-round

programming for children ages 7-17 who have been diagnosed with serious illnesses such as cancer, epilepsy, heart disease, sickle cell anemia, immune deficiencies and other chronic conditions. The camp's facilities include 16 camper cabins, a fully equipped medical center, an arts and crafts studio, a swimming

CAMP BOGGY CREEK



own

ATURE UP



facility, a sports complex, a ropes course and a nature barn, all designed to ensure that every camper, regardless of their condition, can participate fully and safely.

Children experience activities they may have never thought possible. Whether it's catching their first fish, riding a horse, climbing a ropes course, or performing in a theater

production, each camper is encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and embrace new experiences. Beyond the thrill of these activities, the camp fosters a strong sense of fellowship and camaraderie where children can connect with others who understand their journey. It's a place where they don't have to explain their condition or feel different—they can just be kids.

Camp Horizon

7369 Sunnyside Dr., Leesburg
camphorizon.org

For nearly five decades, children and teens have grown spiritually while enjoying outdoor adventures at Camp Horizon in Leesburg. The 87-acre camp established on Lake Harris in 1971 has hosted full summer programs since 1976, blending Bible studies, chapel sessions and nightly devotions with exciting activities like sailing, canoeing, archery, riflery and waterskiing.

Camp Horizon offers weeklong camps for ages 8-17, including Youth, Junior and Varsity programs, where campers engage in faith-building lessons and hands-on activities. Returning for the first time in 20 years, Christian Intensive Training (CIT) offers in-depth Bible study and service projects for campers 15 and older. For younger kids, Day Camp provides structured fun with daily devotionals, swimming and team activities, with early drop-off and late pick-up options available.

Beyond summer, Camp Horizon hosts year-round church retreats and faith-based gatherings that foster community, leadership and spiritual growth. With a legacy of faith and adventure, Camp Horizon continues to create life-changing experiences for generations of campers.



CAMP
BOGGY
CREEK

Central Florida Bible Camp

23813 CR 44A, Eustis
cfbiblecamp.org

Since 1956, Central Florida Bible Camp has been a beacon of spiritual growth, adventure and community, offering summer camps and retreats that shape young lives. Nestled in Eustis, CFBC welcomes hundreds of children each year, creating an immersive experience where faith, friendship and fun go hand in hand.

CFBC's summer programs are designed to nurture a child's spiritual development while providing an exciting camp atmosphere. Campers participate in Bible studies, devotionals and chapel services, all seamlessly woven into a week filled with outdoor adventures. From zip-lining across the lake and paintball to swimming, fishing, archery and talent shows, there's no shortage of excitement. The camp fosters an environment where children build lasting friendships, often forming lifelong bonds with peers and mentors.

Each summer, CFBC hosts nine unique sessions catering to different age groups, with programs for children as young as kindergarten through high school seniors. Special sessions like Teen Week, Forever Camp and Upward Bound provide older campers with leadership experiences and spiritual challenges. Winter Camp, held in January, offers a faith-filled retreat during the school year.

Beyond summer, CFBC serves as a year-round retreat center, hosting church gatherings, family events and weekend getaways that strengthen faith and fellowship. With its long-standing commitment to Christian values and personal growth, Central Florida Bible Camp continues to inspire the next generation, helping them develop into strong, faith-filled leaders.



Florida Elks Youth Camp

24175 S.E. Hwy. 450, Umatilla
floridaelks.org/camp

The Florida Elks Youth Camp in Umatilla offers a tech-free summer experience for kids ages 9-13 that blends adventure, personal growth and lasting friendships. Spanning 405 acres, the camp features swimming pools, a ropes course, archery, canoeing, basketball courts and modern cabins with air conditioning and private bathrooms.

The camp runs June 8-July 26 and offers one-week and two-week sessions, with scholarships available for families in need. Session 7 (July 20-26) is free for active military families. Transportation is provided from select Florida locations.

The youth camp provides state-of-the-art amenities, including two shaded swimming pools, a high ropes challenge course, an archery range and a large private lake for canoeing and paddle boating. Campers also have access to a fully equipped indoor gymnasium with three basketball courts, sprawling athletic fields and modern cabins complete with air conditioning and private bathrooms. In addition to exciting recreational activities, the camp emphasizes teamwork, leadership and personal development, while ensuring a safe and engaging environment guided by trained counselors and staff.

The Elks have supported communities for over 150 years, and the FL Elks Youth Camp continues that mission by helping kids build confidence, leadership and teamwork skills.





FLORIDA ELKS YOUTH CAMP

Specialty SUMMER CAMPS

3D ART CAMP AT MONTVERDE ACADEMY

June 16-20
17235 7th St., Montverde
montverde.org/summer-programs

3D Art with Ms. Cunningham is a hands-on summer camp designed for young artists ages 8-11 to explore the world of three-dimensional art. Campers will experiment with cardboard sculptures, mosaics and structural design and learn the fundamentals of balance, texture, and composition. Through creative projects, they'll build confidence in their artistic abilities while bringing their imaginative ideas to life.

CIRQUE SPECTACULAR SUMMER CAMP AT SHOWTIME USA

June 2-6
425 Plaza Dr., Eustis
linktr.ee/ShowtimeUSA

The Circus Camp at Showtime USA offers a week of juggling, clowning, acrobatics and circus magic for young performers ages 5 and up. Led by expert instructors, campers will learn safe and exciting circus skills while building teamwork, creativity and confidence. They'll develop new talents and end camp with a fun showcase of their skills, making for an unforgettable summer experience.

MOUNT DORA BJJ ACADEMY

May-August
2750 Dillard Rd. Ste. 1, Eustis
mtdorabjj.com

This youth camps for ages 5 and up is a great opportunity to introduce Martial Arts in a fun, safe electronic free environment.

CITY OF MOUNT DORA - JUNIOR EXPLORERS

May-August
1405 Lincoln Ave., Mount Dora
cityofmountdorarecreation.com

This camp includes hands-on activities, arts & craft projects, games, sports, water activities and is highlighted by a specific theme each week.

VOLTAGE VOLLEYBALL ALL SKILLS SUMMER CAMP

July 7-10, July 21-24
1544 Lane Park Cutoff Rd., Tavares
voltagevb.com/camps-and-clinics

Take your volleyball game to the next level at Voltage Volleyball Camp. Attendees train with seasoned volleyball coaches and players who will provide proven volleyball techniques.

BISHOPS GATE GOLF ACADEMY - IJGA

June-August
26945 Bella Vista Dr., Howey-in-the-Hills
ijga.com

Combining elite coaching, world-class golf facilities and top-tier academics through a partnership with Montverde Academy, IJGA provides student-athletes with a comprehensive program designed to elevate their game while fostering personal growth in a diverse, international environment.

CENTRAL FLORIDA KARATE - MOUNT DORA

May-July
2705 Old W. Hwy. 441, Mount Dora
cfkarate9.wixsite.com/studiosofcfk

CFK II offers a dynamic martial arts program specializing in Shito Ryu karate, kickboxing and De La Riva jiu-jitsu, and serves as headquarters for the ISKA USA karate and kickboxing teams. The academy's summer camps emphasize skill development, discipline and mentorship, in addition to providing students with training alongside five current world champions.

MARTIAL ARTS WORLD

May-July
284 W. Ardice Ave., Eustis
martialartsworldustis.com

This one-of-a-kind summer camp offers a dynamic mix of martial arts training, self-improvement and fun activities to keep kids engaged all summer long. Campers participate in one to two daily martial arts classes focused on physical fitness, mental discipline, confidence and leadership skills. Beyond training, the camp includes structured games, activities and weekly field trips that ensure an exciting and well-rounded experience. This camp with an emphasis on focus, respect and self-discipline helps children build lifelong skills while having an unforgettable summer.

STARBOUND PERFORMERS DANCING DRAGONS

June 5
842 W. Myers Blvd., Mascotte
starboundperformers.com

Starbound Performers Dancing Dragons Summer Camp is a high-energy program where campers can dance, tumble and create fiery-themed arts & crafts. With activities inspired by the strength and agility of dragons, participants will twirl, flip and leap while making new friends and unleashing their creativity.



This exciting camp encourages imagination, movement and fun in a dynamic and supportive environment.

DANCING THROUGH OZ SUMMER CAMP AT SHOWTIME USA

June 9-13
425 Plaza Dr., Eustis
linktr.ee/ShowtimeUSA

This unique camp invites young performers ages 5-14 into the magical world of Oz through dance, music and storytelling. Campers will learn Broadway-inspired choreography, bring beloved Oz characters to life through acting and create themed crafts like wizard hats and emerald jewelry. The week culminates in a spellbinding showcase where participants will dazzle family and friends with their performances.

MOUNT DORA FLAG FOOTBALL CAMP

June 23-27, July 14-18, August 4-8
1405 Lincoln Ave., Mount Dora
cityofmountdorecreation.com

The City of Mount Dora Flag Football Camp offers young athletes ages 8-14 the chance to learn the fundamentals of flag football in a fun and supportive environment. Campers will develop their skills, understand game strategies and practice safe play while enjoying weekly field trips. Designed for elementary and middle school students, this camp provides a great mix of teamwork, fitness and excitement throughout the summer.

MOUNT DORA SOCCER CAMP

June 9-13, June 30-July 3, July 21-15
1405 Lincoln Ave, Mount Dora
cityofmountdorecreation.com

Kids will learn foundational skills and strategies, participate in drills, practices and scrimmages. Field trip is Included.

MOUNT DORA THEATER CAMP

June 16-27, July 7-25
520 N Baker St., Mount Dora
cityofmountdorecreation.com

The City of Mount Dora Theater Camp offers young performers opportunities to develop acting, singing and stage skills in a fun and creative environment. Campers can choose between two experiences: the Advanced Musical Theater Camp for ages 10-14, which focuses on skill-building and performance techniques; or the Musical Theater Camp for ages 6-12, which includes field trips, pool visits and engaging theater activities.

ARTS & CRAFTS CAMP MONTVERDE

June 9-13, June 23-27, July 7-11
17235 7th St., Montverde
montverde.org/summer-programs

The Montverde Academy Arts & Crafts Camp invites young artists ages 9-12 to express their creativity through painting, beadwork, tie-dye, sand art and more. Campers will experiment with different materials, develop new artistic skills and make lasting friendships in

a fun and supportive environment. With hands-on projects and plenty of room for imagination, this camp is perfect for kids who love to create and express themselves through art.

LEESBURG CENTER FOR THE ARTS SUMMER CAMP

June-July
429 W Magnolia St., Leesburg
leesburgarts.com

The Leesburg Center for the Arts Summer Art Camp provides a fun and creative space for young artists to explore their talents in a supportive environment. Open to children ages 6-16, the camp offers hands-on instruction in drawing, painting, sculpture and mixed media projects, allowing campers to develop artistic skills while expressing their creativity. Sessions are divided by age group, ensuring that activities are tailored to different skill levels. Scholarships are available for local students, making this an accessible opportunity for young artists in the Leesburg community. ☎





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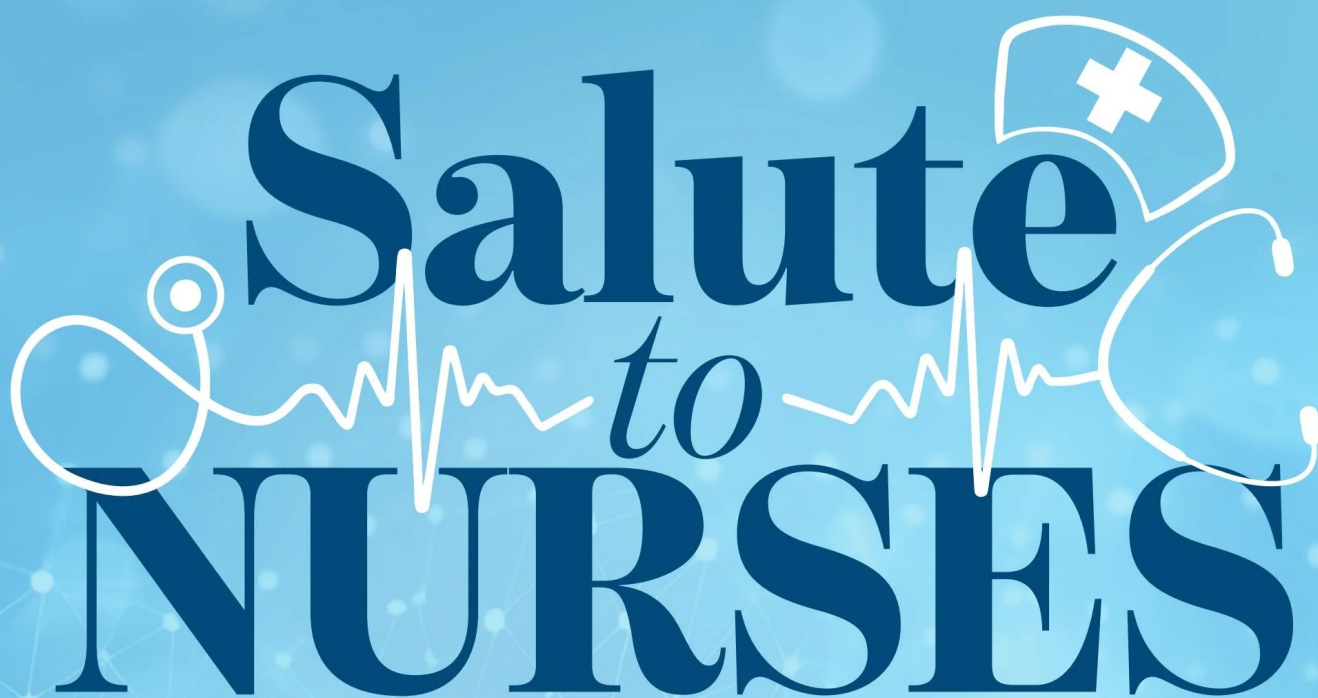
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Salute *to* NURSES



They are the heart of healthcare—the compassionate hands that heal, comfort and advocate. In this special feature, we share the inspiring stories of nine dedicated professionals across various fields, from the fast-paced ER to the tender moments of hospice care. They open up about their most memorable experiences, the challenges they embrace and the deep sense of purpose that fuels their work. Often the ones patients confide in most, nurses provide not just medical care but also emotional support, a listening ear and unwavering strength. Their passion and resilience remind us just how vital they are—every single day.

STORIES: EDITORIAL STAFF × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL



Heartfelt Compassion

JENNIFER DINKINS supports patients and families at end-of-life with gentle understanding and care.

STORY: CYNTHIA MCFARLAND



JENNIFER DINKINS always had a caregiver's personality.

The middle child of three routinely looked after her little sister while growing up. Jennifer also watched her mother serve as children's director at their church and that desire to make a difference resonated with her.

"I've always felt like my calling is to help other people," says Jennifer, a 2017 Tavares High School graduate who attended Rasmussen University and became an RN in the fall of 2023.

"I got a job right out of nursing school in the ICU unit. I saw a lot of difficult situations and felt like I wanted to make a difference in end-of-life care," says Jennifer, 26.

Her decision was also influenced by the remarkable care provided during the passing of several family members.

"My husband, Julius' father and both his grandmothers all passed in a one-year span," Jennifer says. "The care that was provided to them was wonderful, and that made my heart want to do this work."

She became a hospice nurse as a result. This March marked

one year for Jennifer working as an RN case manager at VITAS Healthcare in Mount Dora.

"We help patients with symptom management at end of life," Jennifer says. "Not only do I get to help the patient who is dying, but also their family."

"As hospice nurses, we need to have a loving and respectful way to help family members grasp the concept of what's happening to their loved one."

Jennifer and Julius have a 2-year-old son, River, and she's pregnant with their second son, whom they've already named Charley after Julius' father who passed in late January.

"Weekends are all about family, and I love being home with my kids, but I also love taking care of others," Jennifer says. "Our family has a great support system that enables me to do this work I love."

Q *What is the most rewarding part of being a hospice nurse?*

Jennifer: There are obviously hard days, but I truly love my job. I get to hear patients' stories, build relationships and be part of this end-of-life journey with them. At the end of the day, I feel like helping them is what really matters, even if I just make them smile.

Battle-Tested, Patient-Focused

From the front lines to the exam room,
AMY ESTER is redefining patient care.

STORY: GINA HORAN

AMY ESTER is more than a family nurse practitioner. She's a wife, a proud mom of three, and the driving force behind Anchored in Health in Oxford.

She is also a proud Army veteran.

"I walked into the recruiting station when I was 18," she says. "At that time, women weren't being accepted into combat roles, so I went the X-ray route instead."

After training in Germany, she was deployed to Iraq in 2004.

"Some went to Tikrit, some to Fallujah, and I ended up in Mosul," she recalls.

While she admired the doctors in the field, it was the relentless and compassionate nurses who left the biggest impression.

"My mom and grandma were nurses, but I didn't realize it was in my blood until later," she says. "When I was stationed at Walter Reed working in women's imaging and caring for soldiers fresh from the field, I realized I wanted to do more."

Being in D.C. also brought her future husband, Jimmy, into her life.

"He was in the Presidential Salute Battery for Arlington," she says

with a smile. "We've built this whole life together."

Amy planned to be career soldier, but fate had other plans.

"Every time I thought I'd move up, I got pregnant," she says with a laugh. "My first pregnancy was traumatic, and I was inspired by the nurses who cared for me."

Then, a personal loss changed Amy forever.

"My son was stillborn in 2013, and that kind of loss could have broken me, but it didn't," she says. "It made me want to help people even more."

Eleven months later, she had her youngest child.

"Now, I have three kids here and one in heaven," she says.

That loss also shaped her approach to medicine.

"The difference between sympathy and empathy is huge," she says. "I've been through a lot, and I know what it feels like so I think those experiences make me a better caregiver."

She also refuses to conform to the fast-paced, impersonal nature of modern medicine with its quotas and numbers racket.

"Healthcare has moved too far from the patient," she says. "I plan to bring it back to the personal relationship it deserves."



Q Did you know?

Amy joined the Army in 2001, months before 9/11. She was sworn in January of 2002 and was honorably discharged as a Sergeant (E-5) after six years of service to her country. She is proud to be a United States Army combat veteran and loves to tell stories about her time in the service.

A Pulse for Patients

KATHY HOUGH'S

dedication to heart health goes beyond the procedure room.

STORY: ROXANNE BROWN



KATHY HOUGH, Structural Heart Coordinator at UF Health Leesburg, has always loved caring for others.

That passion led her to pursue a career in nursing when her youngest child started kindergarten. Enrolling at Lake-Sumter State College, she was drawn to cardiology thanks to an inspiring cardiac nursing instructor. Her career in cardiac care took off in 2008 when she began working at UF Health Leesburg—then Leesburg Regional—as a patient care technician on the cardiac floor.

Over the years, Nurse Kathy gained extensive experience in various cardiac specialties, spending time as a floor nurse in cardiac medical, transitioning to the cath lab, and eventually assisting in open-heart surgeries for nearly eight years.

“All of that experience in different areas of nursing has molded me into what I do now,” she says.

As Structural Heart Coordinator, Kathy plays a critical role in guiding patients through complex procedures such as TAVR (transcatheter aortic valve replacement), MitraClip and Watchman. These minimally invasive procedures can be life-changing, but navigating the process can

be overwhelming for patients, especially those without family nearby.

“My job is to coordinate patient care from start to finish, ensuring they understand every step,” she explains. “I take extra time to walk them through what to expect, answer their questions, and advocate for them.”

Beyond the technical aspects of her job, Kathy treasures the relationships she builds with patients. Unlike her time in the operating room, where she rarely saw patients beyond their procedures, she now follows up with them for up to two years.

“When I make that 30-day call or meet with them at the one-year mark and they remember me, it’s incredibly rewarding,” she says.

Kathy also values the strong teamwork among healthcare professionals.

“I get to work closely with surgeons and cardiologists, presenting cases and ensuring each patient gets the best care possible,” she says. “It takes a whole team to make a difference.”

For Kathy, the role is the perfect blend of patient interaction and organizational leadership.

“I don’t miss the early hours of the OR,” she admits with a laugh, “but I love knowing I’m making a lasting impact.”

Q *How important is working as a team in medicine?*

Kathy: It’s everything. No single person can do it alone. Nurses, doctors, pharmacists—we all play a crucial role. Patients rely on us, and when they don’t have family to advocate for them, we become that support system. It truly takes a village.

From Detours to Destiny

JESSICA HIGGINS inspired by helping patients from all walks of life through some of their hardest moments.

STORY: ROXANNE BROWN

JESSICA HIGGINS always knew she wanted a career in the medical field, but the path to where she is today—working in radiation oncology at the Robert Boissoneault Oncology Institute (RBOI)—was anything but straightforward.

“I actually flunked out of nursing school when I was 19,” Jessica admits. “I didn’t prioritize my studies; I thought my chance was gone.”

Instead, she became a medical assistant, working in ophthalmology, dermatology and primary care. Then, in 2016, after her grandfather passed in hospice, nursing once again tugged at her heart.

“I saw how the nurses cared for him, and I knew it’s what I needed to do,” she says.

At 32, with three young children, Jessica returned to school, graduating in 2019 just before the coronavirus pandemic.

“My unit became a COVID unit, and I was doing CPR multiple times a shift,” she says. “It was emotionally and physically exhausting. As a new nurse, it was especially rough.”

After a year in the hospital, she moved to home health. After two and a half years, she moved into radiation oncology.

“I initially thought that God was leading me to be a hospice nurse, but I felt like something was missing,” Jessica says, explaining that a friend later suggested radiation oncology and mentioned an open position.

Now at RBOI, Jessica guides patients through their cancer diagnoses and treatments. “The initial appointment is always the hardest—they’re scared, overwhelmed. We walk them through every step, so they know they’re not alone.”

Many assume radiation oncology is just treatments and machines, but Jessica says it’s much more.

“We become a support system. We educate, comfort and celebrate victories. Some patients are stoic at first, but it’s just fear. Once we start talking to them, they come out of their shells,” she says. “Some days I’m crying with patients terrified of their diagnosis, the unknown or dealing with the side effects of radiation. Other days, I’m crying with patients who come back months or years later just to say hi, thank you, or to tell us their scan is clean and they’re cancer free.”

“This is what I was meant for.”

Q How do you handle the emotional toll of your job?

Jessica: I’d like to say I’ve always handled it well, but it took time to learn to leave it at the door and remind myself I’ve done all I could do for that day. I have hobbies that help—reading is my escape. I keep my Kindle with me everywhere I go and sometimes, I just pray for strength.



From Patient to Nurse

TAYLOR PAGEAU'S unexpected journey was a blessing in disguise.

STORY: CYNTHIA MCFARLAND

Shortly after finishing academy training, **TAYLOR PAGEAU'S** dream of being a firefighter became reality.

He and his wife, Emily, moved from St. Cloud to Clermont in February 2021 when Taylor, then 26, was hired by the Ocoee Fire Department. Barely two months later, on April 19, he suffered a grand mal seizure at work and was rushed to the hospital.

Taylor had experienced bad migraines since childhood but never expected what the CT scans revealed: a nearly baseball-sized brain tumor in his frontal lobe.

Because the tumor was pressing on his brain, the decision was made to remove as much as possible during an eight-hour surgery on April 28.

Fortunately, it was a benign epidermoid brain tumor, not cancerous, but recovery from brain surgery takes time—both mentally and physically.

Taylor is overwhelmingly grateful for the moral and financial support he and Emily received from their church, friends and the community during those months.

Eager to get back to the firehouse, Taylor was in his first three months at Lake County Fire Department when he had a second seizure. It was time for a career change, Taylor decided.

"I had already considered being a nurse before going to fire school, so I went to Keiser (University) for nursing school in 2022," Taylor says. "I worked night shifts as a tech at AdventHealth Waterman

during school. They were incredibly helpful and flexible with shifts."

Having graduated as an RN in December 2023, he now works at Waterman as an ER nurse.

"I think God had a plan in all this," he says. "I'm glad I switched into nursing. I'm part of the whole picture and able to help people over a whole shift of 12 hours, not just the brief amount of time I would as a firefighter."

Taylor finds that the experience of having been a patient himself makes him a much better nurse.

"It's a huge tool I can use to relate to people and help them on an emotional and spiritual level," he says.

Q *If you could rewrite the past four years, what's one thing you wouldn't change?*

Taylor: The experience of having everything taken away. We get so dependent on our own strength, but when everything's gone, God will make a way.

Q *What is the most valuable thing you've learned on this unexpected journey?*

Taylor: Never give up. Believe that if you keep pushing forward there will be a finish line. When I went through the fire, I found God was there for me. It challenged my faith, but it made my faith stronger.

Called to Care

Guided by faith, **SADIE MILLER-RODRIGUEZ** serves as a healing hand in pediatric care.

STORY: CINDY PETERSON

When her grandmother became critically ill, **SADIE MILLER-RODRIGUEZ** felt a pull in her heart to serve like those who took such good care of someone closest to her.

After graduating from Mount Dora High School, she began her journey at Lake-Sumter State College before transferring to AdventHealth University in Orlando to complete her degree and step into a career in pediatrics.

Her first role was at AdventHealth Orlando in 2020, where she worked in the pediatric epilepsy unit at the children's hospital. Entering the field during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic became one of the scariest times in her career.

"Our workload was crazy, and our orientation wasn't orthodox," she says. "I went straight into being a COVID nurse where healthcare was in a very challenging space."

Despite these challenges, she remains grateful for the experience.

"We experienced the most challenging times in healthcare during that period, so I believe things can only improve from here," she says.

As she and her husband started a family, the need to be closer to home led her to AdventHealth Waterman in Tavares, where she now works as a pediatric nurse.

"Being a pediatric nurse means you're not just caring

for the patient but also for the family," she says. "They are the ones making medical decisions, and you have to ensure everyone is on the same page."

Sadie treats a range of pediatric patients, from those suffering from viral and bacterial infections to children requiring IV fluids or short-term oxygen therapy, where they serve as an essential step between home care and higher-level facilities in Orlando.

For Sadie, nursing is more than just a career—it is a calling.

"I love being a part of God's healing hands," she says. "I feel like I am a piece of what He is doing. He is ultimately the healer, but we get to be part of His healing practice. That gives me so much joy."

Q *What's the scariest situation you've found yourself in?*

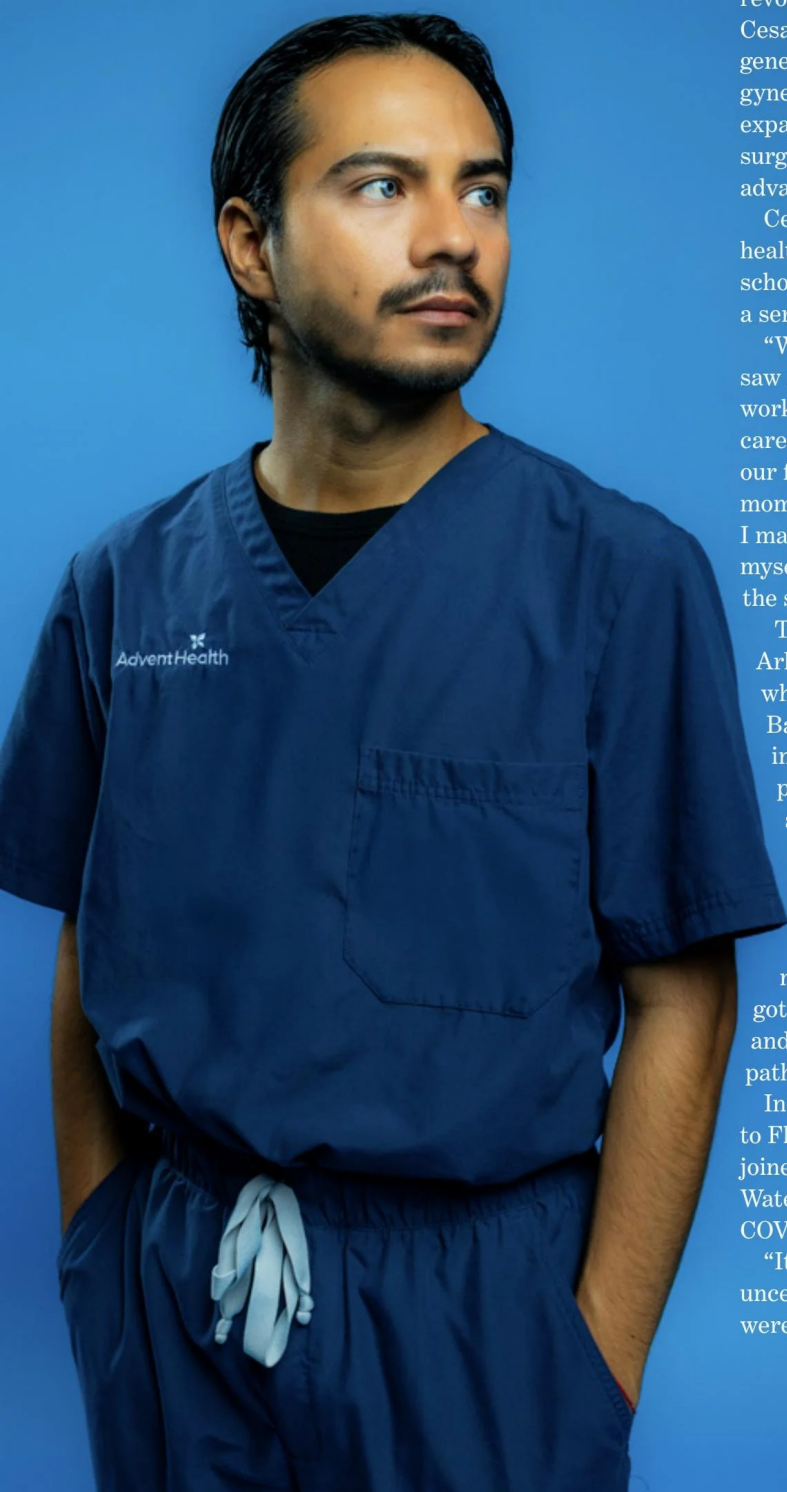
Sadie: During COVID, we didn't even know how it could impact epilepsy patients until two years ago. COVID escalated the seizures in epileptic patients, but we were working with something completely unknown. It was one of the most demanding times of my career and we had a lot of intense patient cases that I wasn't always emotionally prepared for.



Advancing Care

With robotics expanding at Waterman, **CESAR HERNANDEZ** helps ensure top-tier surgical care close to home.

STORY: CINDY PETERSON



When a patient undergoes surgery at Tavares' AdventHealth Waterman, there's a good chance cutting-edge robotics are playing a role in their care. And behind the scenes, Nurse Manager of Surgical Services **CESAR HERNANDEZ** is ensuring that these innovative procedures run smoothly.

"This technology is revolutionizing patient care," Cesar says. "We started with general surgery, urology and gynecology, and we've now expanded into cardiac robotic surgery—with even more advancements on the way."

Cesar's passion for healthcare began in middle school when his mother faced a serious health scare.

"When she had surgery, I saw firsthand how the nurses worked together, how they cared for her and supported our family," he says. "That moment stuck with me, and I made a promise to dedicate myself to helping others in the same way."

That promise led him to Arkansas Tech University, where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Originally planning for medical school, he switched to nursing after working as an emergency department technician.

"I loved what the nurses did," he says. "I got to work alongside them, and I realized that was the path I wanted to take."

In 2020, he moved to Florida and joined AdventHealth Waterman during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was a terrifying and uncertain time," he says. "We were being floated to different

units, helping wherever we were needed—sometimes the ER, sometimes the COVID floors. We were constantly adjusting as we learned more about the virus."

Now, he is focused on expanding Waterman's surgical capabilities and ensuring that patients don't have to travel to Orlando or Miami for advanced care.

"Bringing robotics to the hospital was a huge step forward," he says.

Cesar also appreciates the small town feel of Lake County and the level of care offered at AdventHealth Waterman.

"This place reminds me of home," he says. "People genuinely care about each other here, and the leadership is incredible. I'm excited to see where we go next."

Q How has robotics benefitted surgical procedures?

Cesar: The goal of robotic-assisted surgery is to make procedures minimally invasive, which means less pain, quicker recovery and better outcomes for patients. Something that used to take three to four days of recovery can now be done with a next-day discharge in some cases. Surgeons use a high-tech console to control robotic arms for precision movements and specialists can even observe or assist remotely.

Home is Where the Healing is

Nurse **AMY KIMBLEY** provides comfort, care and connection beyond hospital walls.

STORY: GINA HORAN

A little over a decade ago, home health care nurse **AMY KIMBLEY** was a happily married mother of two, working her way through business school when life threw her family a devastating challenge.

"My husband, Michael, got really sick with respiratory issues," she says. "We weren't sure he would make it."

Inspired by the kindness and dedication of the medical team that saved Michael, she switched her major, enrolled at the College of Central Florida and entered the nursing program at age 30.

"Thankfully, he recovered, and he's doing so much better now," she says. "I guess out of that tragedy came my career."

Amy graduated at 32 and started as a CNA on the fifth floor of The Villages Hospital, now UF Health Spanish Plains Hospital. She became board-certified in 2016 and, by 2017, was fully immersed in home health, where she says her heart truly lies.

"Working at the hospital was a great experience, but I wanted something more personal," Amy says. "When patients are at home, in a familiar environment, they're completely different."

Her role as an RN for Lake Centre Home Care out of Leesburg requires her to travel around Central Florida and involves evaluations, wound care, and case management.

She also acts as a bit of a diplomat during care.

"Family plays a huge role," Amy says. "We aren't there 24/7 like in a

hospital, so they have to be involved. We're not just teaching the patient, we're teaching the family too."

Amy embraces the challenge of providing support whether a patient is alone or surrounded by loved ones. Saying goodbye can be especially difficult.

"I lost a patient unexpectedly who seemed to be improving," Amy says. "We said goodbye for the day, and then she didn't make it through surgery. It was devastating."

Beyond medical care, Amy often provides emotional support.

"We're also therapists in a way. A lot of my patients don't have anyone to talk to, and we build that trust," she says. "I always stay my authentic self, and I think it comes through."

Q Did you know?

Amy is an amateur homesteader and loves to garden on her 1/2 acre plot of land alongside her hens, cats, dogs and vegetable patch. She is trying to convince her husband Michael that they really need three goats and a miniature Highland cow.



Labor of Love

Through every push, contraction and precious first breath, **NURSE NISHKA** delivers care with skill and heart.

STORY: ROXANNE BROWN

NISHKA LOPEZ, RNC-OB, has been a nurse for 14 years, but her passion for caring for others started much earlier.

As a child, she visited her great-great-grandmother in an assisted living facility, walking the halls and chatting with residents. "I don't know why, but that just kind of stuck with me, and I knew I wanted to go into nursing," she recalls.

After earning her RN from Jersey College School of Nursing in Brandon, Florida, Nishka explored different areas of healthcare, working in doctors' offices and even briefly in a prison.

She found her true calling during her maternal-fetal rotation in nursing school.

"I realized I really enjoyed and was good at maternal medicine, she says. "The idea of helping women through one of the biggest moments of their lives and well, playing with babies; I was just drawn to it."

Now a registered nurse certified in inpatient obstetrics at Orlando Health South Lake Hospital Center for Women and Babies, Nishka thrives in labor and delivery and nursery units. She says it's such a wonderful feeling seeing exhausted, anxious mothers finally getting to hold their newborns.

"When that baby arrives and the whole room lights up, it's magical," she

says. "Sometimes we all cry together."

Nishka's experience as a mother shapes her approach.

"As a woman and a mom, I can relate to these women's emotions," she says. "And it's not just about the

birth; it's about helping them feel confident, safe and informed through the entire experience."

Beyond the rewarding moments, she also provides support during difficult deliveries.

"It can be scary, but we stay calm, listen and do whatever it takes to achieve a healthy mom and baby," Nishka says. "That's always the goal." ❄

A moment Nishka will never forget

Of all the deliveries Nishka has assisted with, one stands out vividly. A newborn baby boy was delivered via emergency C-section after his heart tones dropped drastically. Nishka says the baby was immediately placed in a warmer, where she began chest compressions.

"His heart rate was so low I couldn't feel it, but as we did the maneuvers we've been taught, his heart rate started to come back," Nishka recalls. "The feeling of his heart rate slowly rising under my thumb as I did compressions was like a miracle to me.

"We have annual trainings and quarterly mock drills, but when you see what you've practiced working in the moment and the whole team can come together to do what we need to do to save a life, it's amazing. It was a moment of realization."

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And Songs by David Bowie, Tom Kenny & Andy Paley

Additional Lyrics by Jonathan Coulton

Additional Music by Tom Kitt

Musical Production Conceived by Tina Landau

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FEATURE

Dental



expert:

SHIREEN DHANANI, DMD

Shireen Dhanani, DMD, graduated with honors from the University of Florida College of Dentistry and opened her dental practice in 2004. She expanded her expertise with advanced training in cosmetic dentistry, dental implants, and aesthetic medicine, blending dentistry with whole-body wellness to offer a comprehensive approach to overall wellness.



MY DENTAL TOUCH WELLNESS STUDIO

918 E. Dixie Avenue, Leesburg
352.728.8300
MyWellnessStudio.com
MyDentalTouch.com

Q: What inspired you to expand your dental practice into whole-body wellness?

A: Throughout my career, my goal has always been to help my patients with their health. After building trusted relationships with my patients, I learned so much about their other health concerns beyond dentistry. Many of them were seeking out physicians to address their aesthetic, regenerative wellness, and

overall health concerns, and would ask me for advice.

Dentistry is about more than just teeth. Oral health, functional wellness, and the aging process are all connected. This naturally led to the expansion of our services and opening My Wellness Studio.

Q: What does whole-body wellness mean to you, and how do you incorporate it into patient care?

A: Whole-body wellness means looking at each patient as a complete person—not just focusing on one symptom or area. Your oral health, aesthetic concerns, and overall well-being influence how you feel every day and even how you age.

I incorporate whole body wellness by offering a combination of dental care, aesthetics, and wellness treatments that address both function and appearance. Whether it's using Botox to relieve jaw pain,

improving a patient's smile with Invisalign, or helping someone feel their best with hormone therapy or body sculpting, my goal is to create personalized treatment plans that support my patients' health, confidence, and quality of life. When patients feel good and look good, they're naturally inspired to take better care of themselves, creating a positive cycle that benefits overall health and well-being.

Q: How do facial aesthetics tie into dentistry and oral health?

A: The muscles around your mouth not only influence your smile but also your overall facial harmony. Botox isn't just a cosmetic treatment; it can help with issues like TMJ,

clenching, and grinding by relaxing overactive muscles. Likewise, fillers can restore lost volume around the mouth. PRP (Platelet-Rich Fibrin) has been utilized in dentistry for over 20 years due to its exceptional ability to heal damaged tissue rapidly. In aesthetics treatments, it boosts skin rejuvenation and accelerates recovery following lasers and injectables.



Q: How important is the connection between oral health and whole-body health?

A: Educating patients is a priority because oral health is the gateway to overall well-being. Poor oral health has been linked to a variety of systemic issues, including

heart disease, diabetes, and even complications with pregnancy. Maintaining a healthy mouth enhances your smile but also contributes to your health, vitality, and confidence. We encourage

patients to view their oral health as an integral part of their overall wellness journey, combining the physical aspect with the aesthetic and emotional benefits of self-care.

Q: How has your dental expertise in facial anatomy influenced your approach to facial aesthetics?

A: My background gives me a unique understanding of the complex relationship between oral health and facial aesthetics. I've spent years studying facial anatomy to better understand how the teeth, gums, jaw, and surrounding structures interact

with one another. This knowledge of how the muscles, bones, and tissues of the face work together has been invaluable in my approach to facial aesthetics. For example, when offering services like Botox or dermal fillers, I can precisely

target the muscles and structures around the mouth, cheeks, and forehead to create subtle, natural-looking enhancements that improve appearance while supporting overall function and health of the face.

Q: What types of aesthetic and wellness services do you offer alongside dental care?

A: We offer a wide range of treatments to help our patients feel and look their best inside and out. We offer medical grade facials and peels, lasers and light therapy, along with injectables for adding volume and addressing wrinkles, body contouring, weight loss injections, hair restoration, and intimate health treatments. For patients seeking alternatives to traditional injectables, we offer Attiva and CO2 treatments, which stimulate collagen and elastin using the body's own healing response. Focusing on functional wellness, treatments like Emsculpt benefit muscle recovery and trauma rehabilitation.

Q: How has your experience been since expanding into whole-body wellness, and what kind of feedback have you received from your patients?

A: Opening My Wellness Studio has been an amazing experience for my team and me. It's incredibly rewarding to see patients come in with new confidence after achieving their ideal weight. Some of my younger patients have been able to clear their acne, and others have treated areas of their bodies that once made them feel self-conscious. Seeing these physical and emotional transformations motivates us to keep expanding and offering treatments that truly make a difference in our patients' lives.



Q: Is there anything new you're currently working on or planning to introduce to the community?

A: We're proud to be involved in ongoing research, exploring new, innovative methods to help our patients' health concerns and conditions.

Our newest technology, EXOMind, is designed to enhance brain function, support cognitive health and improve mental clarity and focus. We have exciting news coming up, so visit our website to stay updated.



Sexual Wellness



expert:

COLLEEN WALLACE, APN

Owner of Wallace Health

Colleen Wallace, APN, owner with husband and partner, Ken Wallace, of Wallace Health which offers a wide variety of wellness services, screenings and treatment for illness and injuries, as well as a large menu of aesthetic procedures and individualized treatments for sexual health.



WALLACE HEALTH

287 S. Central Ave.
Umatilla, Florida 32784
352.747.0747
wallacehealthcares4u.com



Q: When a woman is experiencing issues like vaginal dryness at any age, painful sex, incontinence or lack of desire, what are her options for sexual wellness?

A: At Wallace Health, we have many treatments that make it possible for a woman to have a healthy, fulfilling sex life, no matter her stage of life. Bioidentical hormone replacement therapy can be a gamechanger by significantly boosting libido, increasing lubrication, stopping hot flashes and slowing the aging process.

We also have numerous other options that can also help. For example, the O-Shot® is a non-surgical, drug-free procedure that uses the patient's own blood platelets to promote vaginal rejuvenation. It can increase natural lubrication and improve sexual response and arousal, as well as help with incontinence.

FemiLift™ is a non-surgical laser treatment that also treats bladder incontinence and promotes vaginal rejuvenation. Acoustic wave therapy and the FemiLift™ both help women suffering from vaginal dryness and painful sex, which is sometimes caused by Vulvar Lichen Sclerosus, a painful skin condition that can cause itching and thinning of tissue.

Q: What types of treatment options are there for men suffering from sexual health issues, including erectile dysfunction?

A: There are many treatments to restore men's sexual health. Hormone replacement therapy can benefit by helping with sex drive, energy and libido.

For men dealing with bladder incontinence due to age or after a prostatectomy, we can use acoustic wave treatment to break up scar tissue, plaque and improve blood flow.

Acoustic wave treatments can also help rejuvenate your sex life, by allowing for longer lasting, stronger erections.

To treat ED, we can use the P-Shot to

rejuvenate the penis. This procedure also treats Peyronie's disease, which is a connective tissue disorder that causes curvature of the penis, making it difficult to obtain or maintain an erection.

In addition to the treatments described here, we also offer creams, pellets and prescriptions such as Cialis, Viagra, Trimix and Vyleesi.

Wallace Health has a wide range of options for sexual wellness based on each individual's different needs. Call 352.747.0747 today or email us at wallacehealthcares4u@gmail.com to schedule your evaluation and find relief for sexual health concerns.

Home Health Care



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Q: Why Choose VNA of Florida for Home Health Care?

A: As a licensed home health agency, we provide high-quality, compassionate care with direct oversight of our caregivers. We hire, train, and manage our employees to ensure they meet the highest professional standards set by Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). Families can feel confident knowing their loved ones are receiving expert care.



expert:

TRICIA SMOLEN

Director of Client Advocacy



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Q: How Does VNA of Florida Ensure Safety and Reliability?

A: Safety and reliability are our top priorities. All employees undergo extensive Level 2 state and federal background checks before hiring. Additionally, ongoing supervision and training ensure caregivers consistently provide the highest level of care. Our hands-on skills lab further prepares caregivers before they begin working in homes. Since we are a licensed agency, our caregivers are employees—not independent contractors. They work under the direct supervision of a registered nurse (RN) and adhere to strict professional and ethical standards.

Q: Is Home Care Through VNA of Florida a Worthwhile Investment?

A: Choosing home care for your loved one is one of the most meaningful investments you can make. Our professional home care services provide exceptional value through expert oversight, clinical supervision, and liability protection. Our comprehensive approach ensures the safest, highest-quality care—without the stress of managing caregivers independently. It allows your loved one to remain in the comfort of home, while receiving dedicated one-on-one care when you can't be there.

Q: How Are Clients and Caregivers Protected?

A: Our caregivers are fully insured under our workers' compensation and liability policies, providing protection for both clients and staff in case of an injury or incident. By choosing VNA of Florida, families have added protection with fully insured caregivers, reducing potential financial or legal risks and making home care a more secure and reliable option.

Q: Why Trust VNA of Florida for Your Loved One's Care?

A: Choosing a home care provider is an important decision. With RN-managed, fully insured caregivers and a commitment to quality and safety, we provide trusted care that families and physicians rely on. To learn more about how our locally managed organization can support you or your loved one, contact us today.

Q: What Role Does RN Oversight Play?

A: Every client receives a personalized care plan developed by an RN. Nurses conduct assessments, provide clinical guidance, and train caregivers to meet each individual's needs. This level of oversight is crucial for managing complex health conditions and ensuring safe, high-quality care. Families can rest easy knowing their loved ones are supported by experienced professionals.

Cardiovascular



expert:

**DR. GEORG COUTURIER,
MD, FACC**

Cardiologist at Village
Heart and Vein Center

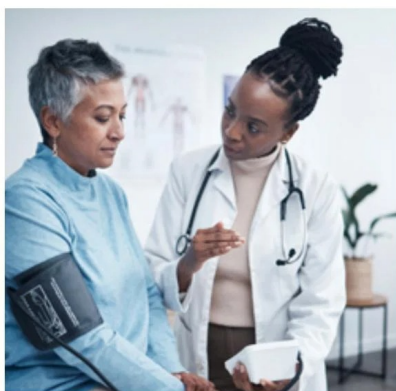


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Q: If I'm ever diagnosed with cardiovascular disease or peripheral artery diseases, why should I choose Village Heart and Vein Center?

A: Cardiovascular disease kills more Americans than the next five leading causes of death combined, according to the American Heart Association (AHA).

When it comes to concerns about your heart or circulation, it is imperative to seek care from well-trained medical physicians with vast experience who stay abreast of the latest advancements and provide appropriate treatments for your individual needs.

Dr. Georg Couturier is one such physician. Since opening his practice in 2011, Village Heart and Vein Center (VHVC) has gained a stellar reputation for providing comprehensive cardiac and vascular care. Dr. Couturier made Castle Connolly's prestigious Top Doctors list after being nominated by his peers in the medical industry.

Dr. Couturier is board-certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine, the American Society of Echocardiography, the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology, the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, the Society for Cardiac Computed Tomography and the NASPE/Heart Rhythm Society. He specializes in general and preventive cardiology, as well as pacemaker and defibrillator implants.

He combines the latest technologies, advanced expertise and personalized attention patients deserve. At VHVC, all patients are thoroughly examined, educated and encouraged to take control of their health care. Our team is committed to patients' well-being and quality of life by fostering meaningful partnerships, providing both professional expertise and compassionate care.

Treatments offered at VHVC include electrophysiology, the study and treatment of the heart's electrical system. This helps patients who develop arrhythmias or abnormal heartbeats. Pacemakers assist those with slow heartbeats, while radiofrequency ablation treats fast heartbeats by using targeted energy to destroy problematic tissue using a catheter that is guided to the area of the heart muscle where damage has occurred. Radiofrequency energy is used to destroy tissue that triggers the abnormal heart rhythm.

VHVC also treats peripheral artery disease (PAD), a narrowing of the arteries in the lower extremities due to plaque build-up. The AHA reports that this disease affects nearly 8 million Americans. If left untreated, PAD can lead to heart attack, stroke, gangrene, high blood pressure, erectile dysfunction and limb loss. Treatment options include laser therapy, which vaporizes plaque and opens blockages, and use of a Roto-Rooter, a rotating drill that shreds plaque around the vessels.

Residents of The Villages and surrounding communities participate in sports and other physical activities and prioritize staying healthy. The talented and caring team at VHVC helps them do just that—because when it comes to taking care of your heart, this practice never misses a beat.

Vision



Q: Is surgery automatically recommended when cataracts are diagnosed during an exam?

A: The decision to do cataract surgery depends on the severity of the cataract and how much it impacts the patient's vision and daily activities. If cataracts cause significant vision problems that interfere with tasks like driving or reading, surgery may be considered. However, if symptoms are mild, doctors may recommend monitoring the cataracts over time with regular eye exams. Surgery is typically recommended when cataracts start to significantly affect quality of life or when other treatments are no longer effective.

Q: What symptoms would a patient need to have for the ophthalmologist to recommend cataract surgery?

A: Symptoms that interfere with a patient's vision and can negatively impact daily activities include:

- Blurred or cloudy vision
- Glare or halos around lights
- Frequent changes in prescription glasses.
- Difficulty seeing at night or in dim lighting
- Faded colors

The decision to choose surgery is based on how much the cataract impacts the patient's daily life and whether other treatments, like new glasses, are effective. The goal is to restore vision and improve the patients' quality of life.

Q: How has cataract surgery changed due to the latest ophthalmic medical advances?

A: Cataract surgery has improved with advancements in technology, including femtosecond lasers for precision and advanced intraocular lenses (IOLs) that correct astigmatism, near and far vision, reducing the need for glasses. The use of smaller incisions and innovative techniques have led to faster recovery times and minimal discomfort. Improved diagnostic tools allow for more personalized treatment, ensuring better outcomes and greater patient satisfaction, making cataract surgery safer, quicker, and more effective.

Q: How have multifocal lens implants made a difference?

A: Multifocal lens implants have enhanced cataract surgery outcomes by reducing patients' dependence on glasses or contact lenses. These advanced lenses provide clear vision at various distances, addressing both near and far sight issues. Toric multifocal lenses also correct astigmatism. Patients experience improved overall visual quality and enhanced daily functioning. The integration of multifocal lenses has revolutionized cataract surgery, offering patients the convenience of sharper vision at multiple ranges without compromising clarity.



expert:

GREGORY J. PANZO, M.D.

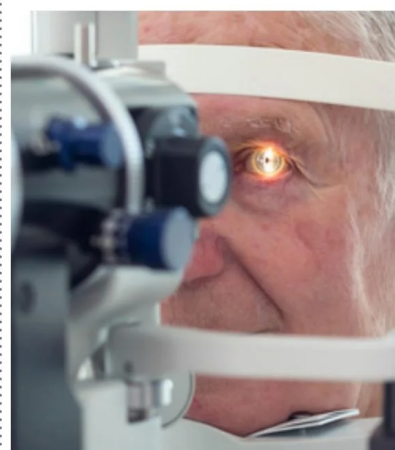
Gregory J. Panzo, M.D., has practiced in Lake County for 40 years. He and Jeffrey D. Baumann, M.D., established Mid Florida Eye Center in 1987. The practice has grown to four clinics, two surgical ambulatory centers and three optical shops.



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Skin Cancer



expert:

SACHIN KAMATH, MD

Board-Certified
Radiation Oncologist

By age 70, one in five Americans are likely to develop skin cancer, the most common cancer in the U.S. There are several types. Skin cancers range from slow growing and easily curable (basal cell and squamous cell) to aggressive types (melanoma and Merkel Cell carcinoma) that can spread quickly if not detected early.

Breakthroughs in Radiation Oncology

Q: How is radiation therapy effective in the treatment of skin cancer?

A: Options for treating skin cancer should take into account its location, size, type, stage, side effects and personal feelings about the cosmetic and functional results of treatment. Radiation therapy offers an excellent noninvasive alternative to more invasive surgical treatments that can sometimes cause scarring or wound-healing problems or undesired cosmetic outcomes.

Radiation therapy delivers invisible beams of high energy radiation rays to kill cancer cells. Radiation treatment is quick and painless, with each session lasting five to ten minutes from start to finish. Patients are able to go about their activities of daily living with minimal side effects and no downtime.

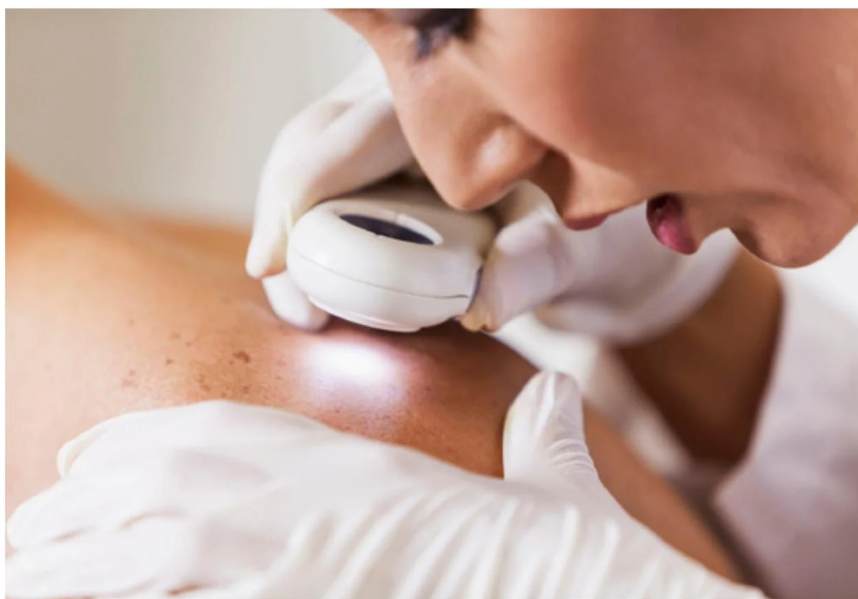
Q: How are modern technologies improving the effectiveness of radiation?

A: Targeted radiation therapy at FCS delivers radiation with high precision to minimize exposure to surrounding healthy tissue or organs. With recent advances in radiation technology and use of specialized

computer software, we can plan and deliver targeted radiation more precisely.

By using three-dimensional imaging systems to confirm the exact location of a tumor and carefully positioning the patient immediately before and sometimes during treatment, we can better target the tumor and protect healthy tissue.

With the more advanced technology we can perform the treatment in shorter courses, sometimes in just five to ten treatments. Ultimately, we are seeing better long-term outcomes.



Q: What are the benefits of receiving radiation therapy in a community-based setting?

A: Cancer treatment today requires a multidisciplinary approach and involves many different specialties working together to do what is best for each patient. At FCS, we continue to apply the enormous ongoing advancements in science and technology to improve the way we plan and deliver cancer treatments.

Our medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, radiologists, pathologists and pharmacists work as a team under one roof with easy access to electronic medical records. These elements make it easier to coordinate and deliver the absolute best treatment for each patient's unique needs—helping to minimize delays in care and enabling us to achieve the best outcomes for our patients.

Q: What are some exciting new developments in radiation therapy for the treatment of skin cancer?

A: FCS continues to make critical investments in the newest technologies, which keeps us at the forefront of cancer care delivery. At the FCS Villages Cancer Center, we are fortunate to have state-of-the-art machines that allow us to administer sophisticated types of radiation treatment. With this more advanced technology, we are able to plan and deliver targeted radiation more precisely, leading to improvements in cure rates and cosmetic/functional outcomes for our patients with skin cancer.

Q: How is radiation therapy contributing to better outcomes for skin cancer patients?

A: The advanced targeted radiation therapy options at FCS are allowing patients to achieve high cure rates with a noninvasive approach that is quick and easy with a short recovery time and minimal disruption of daily living. The cosmetic outcomes with radiation therapy are often more desirable—with little to no scarring or wound-healing issues compared to surgery.



Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute (FCS) provides a comprehensive range of radiation therapy to treat all forms of skin cancer, including basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, actinic keratosis and certain stages of melanoma. Our board-certified radiation oncologists offer electron and proton radiation therapy utilizing focused radiation to kill or prohibit the growth of cancer cells. These therapies offer an alternative to invasive surgical treatments that can sometimes result in poor cosmetic outcomes.

Sachin Kamath, MD is a board-certified radiation oncologist who provides care for all forms of cancer and blood disorders at Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute Villages Cancer Center and Ocala Cancer Center. Dr. Kamath serves as director of radiation oncology for the statewide practice.

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 **FLORIDA CANCER**
SPECIALISTS
& Research Institute

Dental



expert:

JOSEPH A. SORRENTINO II, DMD

Marion Dental Group

Joseph A. Sorrentino II, DMD graduated from the University of Florida College of Dentistry in 2014. A proud Florida Gator, he was part of two National Title football teams, including the 2009 Sugar Bowl Championship season. Marion Dental Group has locations in Lady Lake and Ocala.



MARION DENTAL GROUP

13700 North US Highway 441
Lady Lake, FL 32159
352.259.0822
mariondentalgroup.com



Q: I'm nervous about dental procedures. Are there new methods to help patients relax during treatment?

A: Absolutely! At Marion Dental Group, we now offer conscious sedation, which is a lot like the relaxing effect of a glass or two of your favorite wine. It keeps you awake and responsive but reduces anxiety and discomfort during dental procedures. This option is ideal for those who experience dental anxiety or are undergoing extensive treatments, as it helps make your visit as comfortable as possible.

Since sedative medications can impair judgment, coordination, and reaction times for several hours, patients who receive treatment under conscious sedation should not drive themselves home after the procedure. At Marion Dental Group, we actually require an Escort Agreement to ensure that a responsible adult stays with the patient for the remainder of the day.

Q: Why are dental X-rays necessary even if I don't have any tooth pain?

A: Your teeth might look perfectly fine on the outside, like a freshly washed car. But just as a car with a beautiful exterior could have a failing engine, your teeth can have hidden problems that aren't visible to the naked eye. Dental X-rays are like a mechanic's diagnostic tools, allowing us to see beneath the surface. They reveal issues like early decay between teeth, problems below the

gum line, or abnormalities in the jawbone. By identifying these "engine problems" early, dental X-rays help prevent more serious conditions, pain, and more costly repairs in the future. This ensures comprehensive dental health management with minimal risk.

Patients with good oral health and no significant risk factors typically only need full dental X-rays every 3 to 5 years. For at-risk patients with oral health concerns, a series of full-mouth X-rays is recommended every 1 to 3 years. Routine bitewing X-rays to check for cavities are recommended once a year for most patients.

Modern dental X-rays are very safe, exposing patients to extremely low levels of radiation, less than what you'd be exposed to on a 2- to 3-hour airline flight.





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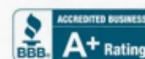
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A photograph of a golfer in mid-swing, wearing an orange polo shirt, grey trousers, and a light blue cap. The golfer is seen from the back, with the golf club extended behind them. The background is a blurred green golf course under a clear sky.

INNOVATING SHOULDER SURGERY AND JOINT HEALTH

The expertise of
Dr. Alfred Cook
at Advanced
Orthopedics Institute

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

When it comes to cutting-edge orthopedic care, Dr. Alfred Cook stands at the forefront of shoulder surgery, sports medicine, and cartilage regeneration. As the Chief of Orthopedic Surgery at UF Health Spanish Plaines Hospital and the Medical Director for the TLC Surgical Center, Dr. Cook has earned a reputation as a leader in advanced surgical techniques. His passion for improving joint health and mobility drives his commitment to helping patients—whether they are athletes recovering from injuries or older adults seeking relief from chronic pain.

Among his many contributions to the field, Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty (RTSA) is one of the most groundbreaking procedures Dr. Cook specializes in. This advanced surgical technique has transformed the lives of patients who previously had limited treatment options due to severe rotator cuff damage or arthritis.

WHAT IS REVERSE TOTAL SHOULDER ARTHROPLASTY (RTSA)?

RTSA is a specialized form of shoulder replacement surgery that utilizes the latest advancements in implant design and surgical precision. Unlike traditional shoulder replacements, which require an intact rotator cuff,

RTSA is specifically designed for patients with irreparable rotator cuff damage, severe arthritis, or complex fractures.

This procedure was introduced in the U.S. about 20 years ago and has since become a revolutionary solution for many patients. Dr. Cook has played an instrumental role in refining RTSA techniques, collaborating with leading medical technology companies to develop innovative implants that improve patient outcomes.

HOW RTSA DIFFERS FROM STANDARD SHOULDER REPLACEMENT

In a traditional shoulder replacement, the damaged parts of the shoulder joint are replaced with artificial components that mimic the body's natural anatomy—a round ball component fits into a socket, allowing smooth movement. However, this approach relies on a healthy rotator cuff to stabilize and move the joint.

RTSA TAKES A DIFFERENT APPROACH:

▶ The ball and socket positions are reversed—the artificial ball is placed where the socket was, and the socket is positioned where the ball was.

▶ The socket is placed on the arm side of the joint and is supported by a metal stem implanted in the humerus (upper arm bone).

▶ This reversal allows the deltoid muscle (instead of the damaged rotator cuff) to take over shoulder movement, providing stability, pain relief, and restored function.

Because RTSA does not rely on an intact rotator cuff, it is a highly effective solution for patients with severe rotator cuff injuries combined with arthritis—conditions that would make a standard shoulder replacement unsuccessful.

WHO IS A CANDIDATE FOR RTSA?

RTSA is an excellent option for patients who experience:

▶ Irreparable rotator cuff tears that prevent normal shoulder movement.

▶ Severe osteoarthritis, leading to joint deformities and debilitating pain.

▶ Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), an autoimmune disease that deteriorates joint tissue.

▶ Complex shoulder fractures, especially those that are unlikely to heal correctly.

▶ Persistent pain and loss of function that do not respond to conservative treatments like medication, injections, or physical therapy.

For many patients, pain is the primary reason they seek treatment from Dr. Cook. With RTSA, they can regain their mobility and significantly improve their quality of life.

COMPREHENSIVE ORTHOPEDIC CARE AT AOI

At Advanced Orthopedics Institute (AOI), Dr. Cook and his team take a

holistic approach to orthopedic care. Their mission extends beyond surgical interventions—they focus on comprehensive treatment plans that address joint health, rehabilitation, and long-term mobility.

EXPERT SURGICAL INTERVENTIONS

Dr. Cook specializes in a range of advanced procedures, including:

▶ Reverse and standard total shoulder replacements

▶ Rotator cuff repairs

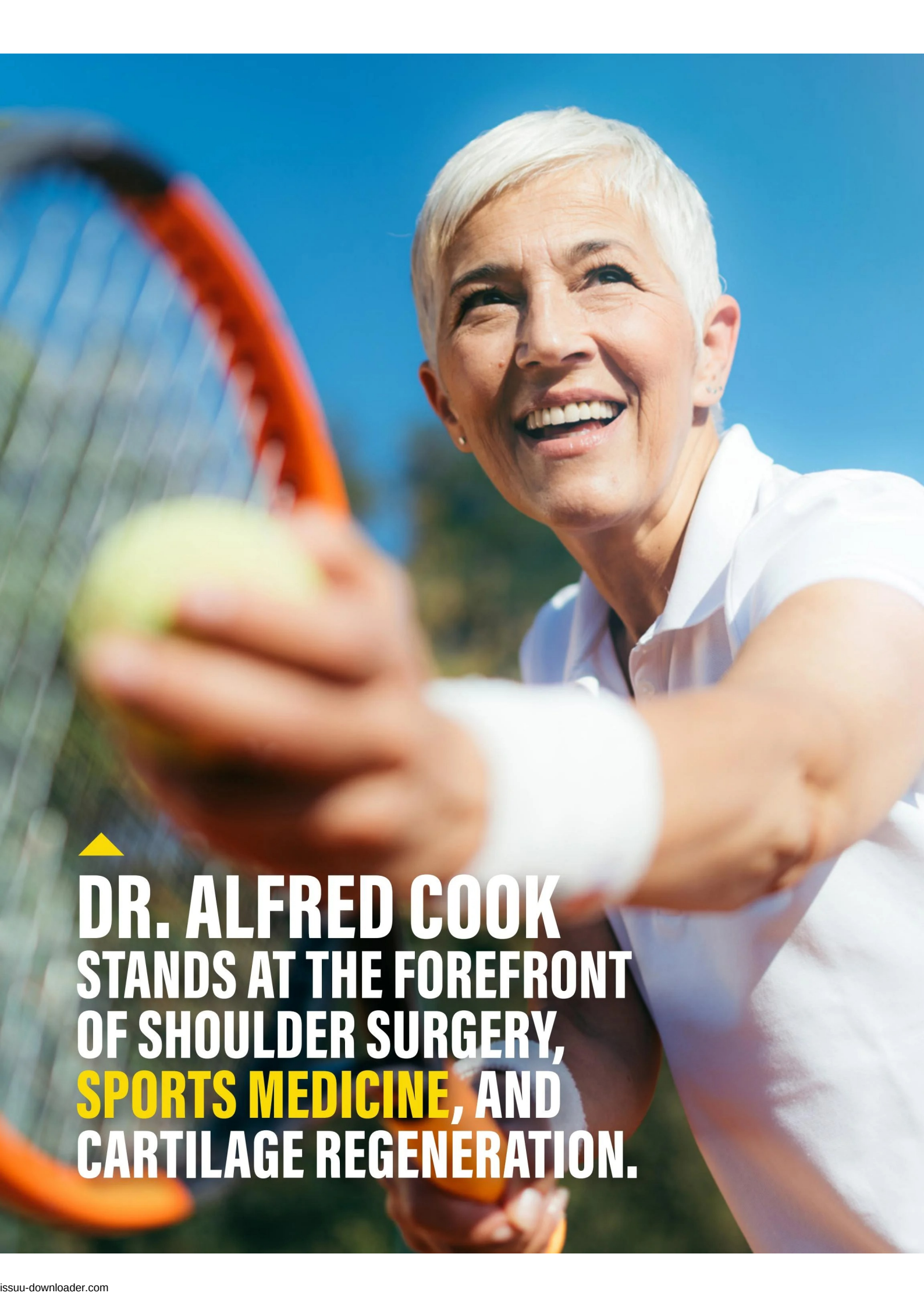
▶ Minimally invasive arthroscopic surgeries

▶ Cartilage regeneration techniques

Every procedure is meticulously planned to ensure precision, reduced recovery times, and optimal patient outcomes.

DR. COOK AND HIS TEAM TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ORTHOPEDIC CARE





▲
DR. ALFRED COOK
STANDS AT THE FOREFRONT
OF SHOULDER SURGERY,
SPORTS MEDICINE, AND
CARTILAGE REGENERATION.

PHYSICAL THERAPY AT AOI: ENHANCING RECOVERY AND MOBILITY

At Advanced Orthopedics Institute (AOI), physical therapy plays a crucial role in ensuring optimal recovery and long-term mobility for patients undergoing treatment with Dr. Alfred Cook. The collaboration between Dr. Cook's surgical expertise and AOI's highly skilled physical therapy team creates a seamless, patient-centered approach to healing.

Whether a patient has undergone Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty (RTSA), rotator cuff repair, or other orthopedic procedures, physical therapy is essential in restoring strength, flexibility, and function. AOI's physical therapists work closely with Dr. Cook to design individualized rehabilitation programs, ensuring that each patient progresses safely and effectively through their recovery journey.

KEY BENEFITS OF AOI'S PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES INCLUDE:

- ▲ Pain management and inflammation reduction through targeted therapies
- ▲ Customized exercise programs to rebuild strength and mobility
- ▲ Manual therapy techniques to improve joint function and flexibility
- ▲ Post-surgical rehabilitation to enhance healing and prevent complications

By integrating advanced orthopedic care with personalized rehabilitation, AOI helps patients regain their active lifestyles faster and with better outcomes. The goal isn't just recovery—it's about achieving long-term joint health and improved quality of life.

JOINT HEALTH AND REHABILITATION

AOI is more than a surgical center—it's a partner in long-term joint health. The institute offers specialized treatments for:

- ▲ Sprains, fractures, and cartilage injuries
- ▲ Tendonitis and overuse injuries
- ▲ Post-surgical rehabilitation and physical therapy

Dr. Cook works closely with highly skilled physical therapy professionals to develop individualized rehabilitation plans. These customized programs help patients regain strength, flexibility, and function, ensuring a smooth recovery and long-term mobility.

PIONEERING INNOVATION IN ORTHOPEDICS

Dr. Cook's expertise extends beyond surgery—he is a pioneer in surgical navigation and regenerative medicine. His contributions to precision-driven shoulder replacement techniques underscore AOI's commitment to cutting-edge orthopedic solutions.

By leveraging advanced technologies such as 3D imaging, custom implants, and minimally invasive surgical techniques, AOI ensures higher accuracy, less trauma to surrounding tissues, and better long-term results for patients.

YOUR PARTNER IN PAIN-FREE LIVING

At AOI, the focus isn't just on treating injuries—it's about helping patients reclaim their active lifestyles. Whether it's alleviating chronic joint pain, restoring shoulder mobility, or guiding patients through post-surgical recovery, Dr. Cook and his team are dedicated to providing personalized, high-quality care.

If you or a loved one is struggling with shoulder pain, joint issues, or limited mobility, Advanced Orthopedics Institute is ready to help you take the next step toward pain-free living.

**AT AOI, THE
FOCUS ISN'T JUST
ON TREATING
INJURIES—IT'S
ABOUT HELPING
PATIENTS RECLAIM
THEIR ACTIVE
LIFESTYLES**



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I N S T I T U T E

Sharon L. Morse Medical Center
1400 U.S. 441 N., Unit 552, The Villages / 352.751.2862
advancedorthopedicsinstitute.com

YOUR HEALTH IS A PRIORITY

If anything good came out of the pandemic, it's that people are making more efforts at self-care than ever before. The health and wellness market is booming with 82 percent of American consumers making wellness a priority.

When it comes to health, fitness, nutrition, sleep, appearance and mindfulness, people of all ages are more focused on healthier living. In recent years, Gen Z and Millennials are outspending older generations on wellness products and services.

When Sabrina Ciceri opened Immunity Health in June 2020, her goal was to help people take accountability over their own health. Mission accomplished.

"There's been an increase in people being open minded to different ways of taking care of themselves. They're very interested in finding ways to stay healthy and reverse disease processes," says Sabrina, who has worked in the area of preventative health with the world's leading wellness institute for the past 15 years and has seen thousands reverse major health disorders and terminal illness thru giving the body support it needs to not just survive... but THRIVE!

"People have been asking for more options, and as I've learned more about the things that heal the body, we have added to Immunity's services," she says.

"We are doing a wellness center unlike any other in the state of Florida. There's nowhere else in the state where you'll find all of these services under one roof," says Sabrina of their 6,000-square-foot facility which will be open by May 1, if not earlier. This new location is four times the size of the current facility.

"We know that the body can heal itself when given the support it needs. I do consultations all the time where people say their doctor has told them to take a certain medication, but the patient has done their own research and wants to try something based on wellness before they go on medication. Many of them want to try options like supplements or hyperbaric treatments rather than just turn to pharmaceuticals," notes Sabrina, who leads the team of expert providers.

"We're not a primary care doctor, but we can be a trusted place for you to get testing done, including hormone, nutrients, food allergies, metabolic dysfunction, etc. Many doctors don't usually test for these, but all those tests are important to get to the bottom of what's causing inflammation and other issues."

"We're adding functional medicine to the practice, so we'll have a medical director on-site," says Sabrina, adding that they'll be looking to hire more people to join the health and wellness team in the larger space.

This increased demand and expanded menu of services are why Immunity Health is moving into a new, much larger location this spring.



WE HAVE YOU COVERED

WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING SERVICES

Thermal indoor Cycle

This indoor Scandinavian spa is the only one in the state of Florida. Cycle consists of alternating rounds of hot tub, cold plunge, infrared sauna and steam room.

Body treatments

Full menu of treatments--ranging from scrubs, wellness applications and wraps--to promote healing, hydration and detox in the body.

Colonics

State-of-the-art, closed system colonics help improve digestion, enhance nutrient absorption, increase energy levels, support weight loss and more.

Skin care treatments

Organic, wild-crafted and professional grade products and techniques to cleanse, exfoliate, nourish and hydrate the skin. Along with our radio frequency Microneedling, Scarlet and Medical grade Hydro facial machine, Aquafirme.

Hyperbaric oxygen

Reduce inflammation, joint pain and anxiety, improve and stimulate immune system response, stem cell production and cognitive function in a comfortable, vertical design chamber.

VEMI Bed Therapy

Shifts the body into a parasympathetic state to allow healing and improve sleep quality. Boosts the immune system by increasing circulation and reversing damage caused by oxidative stress.

Theralight 360

Unique 360° Redlight Therapy bed design with 45,000 lights offers 4 deep penetrating wavelengths to reduce inflammation and pain, increase circulation and boost cell energy. Ideal for anti-aging support and muscle recovery.

Sexual Wellness

High frequency, low-intensity shockwave therapy for both men and women helps increase blood flow, allowing for improved performance and pleasure in the bedroom.

Weight Loss

Safe effective coaching and supplementation along with the aid of GLP-1 peptide support without the chemical synthetic side effects.

IV Nutrient Therapy

Quality sourced vitamins and minerals help the body fight and prevent disease, maintain immune function and support overall health.

Nutritional, Hormone, and Food Allergy Testing and Counseling

Highly qualified clinical nutritionist on staff to help you achieve and maintain optimum health.

Supplements

Highest quality brands are available to help the body repair itself, prevent premature aging, and keep the immune system strong and ward off illness.

Juice bar

Fresh juices, wheatgrass, detox shakes, aloe juice, protein shakes and more.

One-time treatments will always be available, but layering multiple therapies, Bio-Stacking, magnifies the benefits. Due to high client demand, Immunity Health is offering memberships for treatments and therapies.

Call now to book your free consultation for health, sexual wellness, and skin analysis.
Your wellness journey begins today!

IMMUNITY

33040 Professional Drive | Leesburg 34788 | 833-4-TIME4U | ImmunityHealth.com

Your **Heart** Health Matters

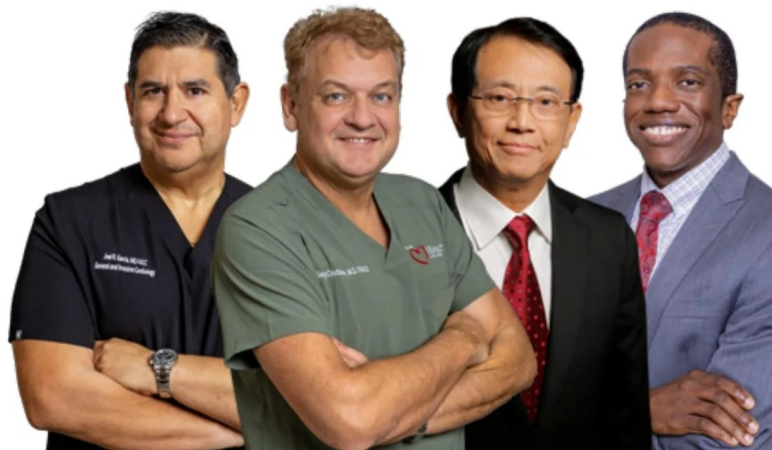
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AGENDA

EVENTS
TRAVEL
PEOPLE

LOCAL TALENT

From uncertainty to inspiration—Jason Sansavera embraces digital art, community and new creative possibilities.





THE TO-DO LIST

2025

apr.

APR
25-27

FESTIVAL

Rubber Meets the Road

Dubbed the "largest three-day motorcycle and music event in the country," Leesburg BikeFest draws bikers and music lovers from all over. Expect live music across multiple stages, vendors, games, contests and a whole lot of horsepower.

→ **Downtown Leesburg & Gator Harley-Davidson** / 1745 US 441, Leesburg / 352.728.9786 ext.3255 / leesburgbikefest.com



EVENT SOMETHING FISHY

A true Leesburg tradition! Join the Leesburg Area Chamber of Commerce under the oaks for the Annual Leesburg Fish Fry at the Mote-Morris House for an all-you-can-eat feast of fried fish, cheese grits, hush puppies, steamed oysters, collard greens and more. Enjoy live entertainment and a fun zone for kids.

→ **Mote-Morris House**
1195 W. Magnolia St., Leesburg
8am-6pm / 352.787.2131
info@leesburgchamber.com

APR
3



FAIR

Step Right Up!

For over 100 years, the Lake County Fair has delighted all ages with live music, livestock shows, carnival rides, 4-H exhibits, art displays and classic fair games. Come hungry—funnel cake, cotton candy, corn dogs, Philly cheesesteaks and elephant ears await!

→ **Lake County Fairgrounds** / 2101 CR 452, Eustis

APR
4-13



apr. ON STAGE

Enjoy quality entertainment on the many stages of Lake and Sumter counties.

FREUDIAN BLIP

4/28

Just when you thought it was safe to go back home, Steve Solomon delivers another masterpiece of family dysfunction. My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish & I'm Still in Therapy is his latest and most hilarious installment, chronicling his ongoing battle against those whose sole mission in life seems to be adding chaos to his.

The Savannah Center / 1545 North Buena Vista Blvd.,
The Villages / 352.750.6084
thevillages.com/entertainment

SONGS & SUDS

3/21-4/13

In Honky Tonk Laundry, Lana Mae Hopkins, owner of the Wishy Washy Washateria, hires Katie to help out at the laundromat. The two quickly find themselves knee-deep in soap, suds and cheatin' hearts. Not just any laundromat, the WWW is a boot-scootin' honky-tonk where Lana Mae and Katie belt out the hits of Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton, Tammy Wynette, Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline and others. By Roger Bean.

The Sonnentag Theatre at the Ice House
1100 N. Unser St., Mount Dora / 352.383.4616
icehousetheatre.com



ONGOING EVENTS

Events are subject to change and cancellation.

EVERY WEEKEND

Lakeridge Winery
presents: Weekends at
the Winery
10am-5pm Sat.
11am-5pm Sun.
19239 US-27, Clermont

EVERY MON

Boozy Bingo at
Sawgrass Grove
5-8pm
766 Marilee Pl.,
The Villages

EVERY MON

Webster Farmers
Markets
6am-2pm
524 N. Market Blvd.,
Webster

EVERY THU

Lake County Farmers
and Flea Market
8am-noon
2101 N. CR 452,
Eustis

1ST FRI

Eustis First Friday
6-9pm
Downtown Eustis

1ST FRI

Clermont First Friday
Food Trucks
5:30-9pm
685 W. Montrose St.,
Clermont

MON & FRI NIGHTS

Cars Shows
in The Villages
5-8pm
Lake Sumter Landing
& Brownwood
Paddock Square



EVENT

Love the Blues

The 11th Annual Mount Dora Blueberry Festival celebrates Lake County's peak blueberry season with fresh-picked berries, blueberry products, a pancake breakfast, live music, crafters and a blueberry pie-eating contest. Enjoy blueberry beer and wine at this FREE event. Proceeds benefit Kiwanis Club scholarships. @

→ **Donnelly Park** / 530 N. Donnelly St., in the heart of Mount Dora / mountdorablueberryfestival.com / 9am-5pm

APR
26-27



Let us help you get the word out!

→ To have an event considered for the calendar, send a short text description along with a color photo (if available) 45 days in advance of event to: calendar@akersmediagroup.com or Lake & Sumter Style Calendar, P.O. Box 490088, Leesburg, FL 34749

apr. JAMS

Move to the beat of your favorite performers at these great concerts or local venues!



4/4 @ 3 & 7pm
CHANGE THE WORLD 2
The Sharon, The Villages

4/4 @ 7pm
ROCKY & THE ROLLERS
The Clermont Performing Arts Center, Clermont

4/5 @ 4 & 7pm
SIMPLY TINA: THE ULTIMATE TINA TURNER TRIBUTE SHOW
The Savannah Center, The Villages

4/5 @ 2:30 & 7pm
MILLION DOLLAR REUNION SHOW
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/6 @ 2:30 & 7pm
#1 BEACH BOYS TRIBUTE
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/7 @ 7pm
BROADWAY OUR WAY
The Savannah Center, The Villages

4/8 @ 7pm
THE VILLAGES PHILHARMONIC
The Sharon, The Villages

4/9 @ 7pm
THE VOGUES & THE HAPPENINGS
The Savannah Center, The Villages

4/10 @ 6pm
MARK RAISCH
Red Sauce, The Villages

4/11 @ 7pm
THE EDGE EFFECT
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/12 @ 2:30 & 7pm
PIANO MEN: GENERATIONS. THE MUSIC OF BILLY JOEL AND ELTON JOHN
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/12 @ 7pm
REBEL: A CLASSIC ROCK EXPERIENCE
The Sharon, The Villages

4/13 @ 7pm
JIVES ACES
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/16 @ 7pm
WALTER TROUT
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/17 @ 7pm
A TRIBUTE TO BON JOVI
Whispering Oaks Winery, Oxford

4/18 @ 4 & 7pm
SHADOWS OF THE SIXTIES
The Savannah Center, The Villages

4/18 @ 7pm
THE GOOD FRIDAY GOSPEL
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/19 @ 7pm
RELIC AMPED!
The Savannah Center, The Villages

4/19 @ 2:30 & 7pm
TAPESTRY-THE CONCERT
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/21 @ 4 & 7pm
TOGETHER AGAIN: BILL DOHERTY & FERNANDO VARELA
The Savannah, The Villages

4/25 @ 7pm
ZOSO: THE ULTIMATE LED ZEPPELIN EXPERIENCE
Clermont Performing Arts Center, Clermont

4/26 @ 2:30 & 7pm
LET'S HANG ON: FRANKIE VALLI TRIBUTE
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

4/28 @ 3pm
THE MUDDS
Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

4/30 @ 3pm
SCOTT DAVIDSON
Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

5/1 @ 7pm
CLASSIC COUNTRY 5-1
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/3 @ 2:30 & 7pm
JOHN CONLEE
Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

ONGOING EVENTS Events are subject to change and cancellation.

EVERY FRI	EVERY SUN	SECOND FRI	EVERY SAT	2ND SAT	4TH SAT	1ST SAT	EVERY SUN
Groveland Farmers Market 9am-1pm Lake David Park	Downtown Mount Dora Village Market 9am-2pm Downtown Mount Dora	Plaid in the Park 5-9pm 230 W. 4th Ave., Mount Dora	Spanish Springs Mercado Outdoor Market & Music 9am-2pm	Main Street Classic Car Show 5-9pm 510 W. Main St., Leesburg	Eustis Classic Car Cruise-in 4-8pm Downtown Eustis	Brown's Junk in the Trunk 13940 US-301, Oxford (Use the field gate south of Brown's Country Store on HWY 301)	Downtown Clermont Farmers Market 9am-2pm Downtown Clermont

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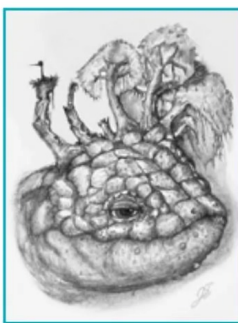
LOCAL TALENT

PEOPLE

The art of dedication

Digital artist Jason Sansavera pursues his passion and possibilities.

STORY: GINA HORAN × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL AND PROVIDED



SAMPLES OF
JASON'S ARTWORK



For Jason Sansavera, the Leesburg Center for the Arts has been more than a place to create. It's been a turning point artistically as he's found a community of artists

who have welcomed and encouraged his pursuits.

"It means everything to find a community that speaks the language of art, creativity and sharing ideas," Jason says.

He compares the atmosphere at the center to a barbershop, a place where artists can exchange ideas, offer support and challenge each other to grow.

Originally from just outside Cleveland, Jason graduated in 2021 from the Columbus College of Art & Design with a bachelor's degree in animation. Like many graduates during the COVID-19 pandemic, he struggled to break into his field.

After nearly two years of job searching, he decided to follow his parents to Florida and relocate to The Villages in 2023. There, he secured a job as a Recreation Assistant—a role that soon became a stepping stone to something greater.

"I was doodling one day at work when two members noticed my designs," he says. "They suggested I apply to the Leesburg Center for the Arts. And here I am."

Jason specializes in digital art, which includes animation, digital painting and

sketching, as well as guiding others through the ever-changing landscape of modern programs. His collaboration with the Leesburg Center for the Arts has helped introduce new digital art opportunities to the community. He is also a member of the Tropical Arts Association, a Florida-based enclave for artists to connect.

He has helped inspire a new generation of artists through tutoring, workshops, presentations and working with resident artist Margaret Everson in the Art U after-school program.

"Working with Margaret has been an inspiration," Jason says. "Digital art is just starting to grow here, and I'm excited to be part of that."

His long-term goal is to work for a smaller digital art studio where he can learn all aspects of the industry before specializing.

"One day I would love to work for Disney or Pixar, but that requires a specialty," Jason says. "Now I'm just looking for an opportunity at a smaller studio so I can explore different skills and creative possibilities." @



Know of a talented person in our community? → Email their story to gina@akersmediagroup.com.



GINA HORAN



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- ✓ Artificial Turf
- ✓ Outdoor Kitchens & Entertaining Spaces



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Angie Stokes & Amanda Simanton



Gary Felty & Skip McFarland



Sean Brooks & Roxie



Anci Rodrigues & Maria Martinez



Manley Morae, Sargent J. Santamaria, Darrell & Anastacia Hatcher



The Morant Family



Donna & Jim Smith, Big Bird, Doc & Dar Watsaw



Kristine Holland, Lee Harris & Harry Oleksives

RIDING HIGH

@ **WILDWOOD** × **PHOTOS: MATTHEW GAULIN**

Lucky U's grand opening was a fun-filled, three-day celebration held November 1-3 at its brand-new, state-of-the-art facility in Wildwood. Over 1,200 motorcycle enthusiasts and members of the community enjoyed a bike show put on by Born to Ride. Bands included Bearded Brothers, Hypersona, Hayfire, Big Engine and more. There was also a bikini contest, fully stocked bar, vendors with free schwag and multiple food trucks. @

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what we cover

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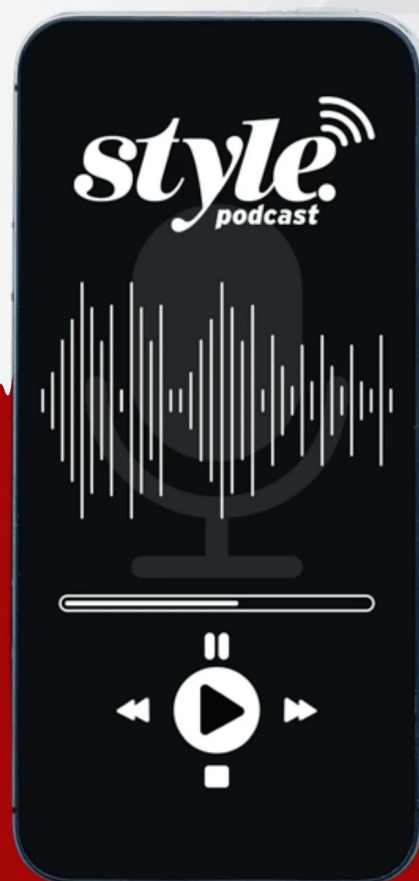
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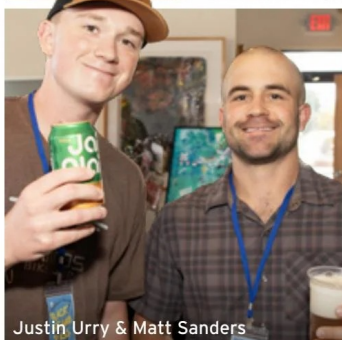
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BUBBLES AND BEATS

@ TAVARES × PHOTOS: ANTHONY RAO

The Bubbles & Brews Rock & Roll Fundraiser was an unforgettable evening celebrating art, music and community support for the Lake County Museum of Art in Tavares on October 19. Guests experienced over 60 stunning portraits of legendary cultural and musical icons, exciting auctions, raffles, delicious BBQ and live, high-energy music from the Roy Baker Band. Thanks to the incredible support of sponsors like the Park West Foundation, the event ensured that LCMA continues its mission to promote art education and provide diverse programs for children and adults throughout Lake County. @

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PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE



Adults who desire healthy, bright smiles are learning that it's never too late to improve your confidence and self-esteem by correcting gapped, crowded, or crooked teeth! Today, more and more adults are embracing the use of orthodontic appliances. Although they may seem like an adolescent rite of passage, there are many good reasons for people of any age to receive orthodontic treatment.

Did you know that 1 in 3 orthodontic patients are adults?

COMMON QUESTIONS BY ADULTS

Am I too old for orthodontic treatment? Age doesn't matter. The key factor in determining a good candidate for treatment is the health of teeth and gums.



How long does treatment take?

It depends on the complexity of the case as well as what the patient wants to achieve. A short-term touch up can be as little as several months, while comprehensive treatment could last for several years.

What's the cost? Orthodontic specialists customize both treatments and fees. After a complimentary face-to-face consultation you can determine what type of treatment, appliance and results might work best for you. A flexible payment plan, which can include dental insurances, FSAs and HSAs may be used to construct an affordable plan.

Can I get appliances that are less noticeable? Many of today's orthodontic treatments are designed to minimize the appearance of the appliance and better fit an adult lifestyle. Keep in mind, limiting your treatment option may limit your results. Whether it is clear braces, or clear aligners, you have discreet choices to help achieve your desired result.

Will treatment fit my lifestyle? Certainly! You can still sing, play an instrument, dine out, kiss and do almost anything. Some temporary adjustments may be necessary, but most patients adapt quickly.

How often are check-ups?

It will depend on the treatment recommendation, but the average is once every six weeks during active treatment.

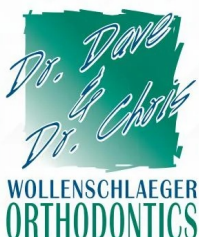
Can treatment help someone who has missing teeth? Yes! Orthodontic treatment can properly align your teeth and create the proper space for future dental procedures like veneers, crowns, implants, etc.

Does gum disease impact orthodontic treatment? It is imperative to have a periodontal (gum) check-up with either a periodontist or your general dentist to make sure that your mouth is a good candidate for treatment.

Will I experience discomfort?

Treatment is more comfortable than ever; thanks to new techniques and appliances. Discomfort, if any, is short lived and can be managed with over-the-counter analgesics.

Dr. Dave and Dr. Chris Wollenschlaeger, a father-son orthodontist duo who practice in Leesburg, are devoted to the highest standards of care for patients of all ages. With an additional two-to-three-years of specialized education beyond dental school, these doctors, along with their specialized orthodontic team can help their patients get on the path to a winning smile.



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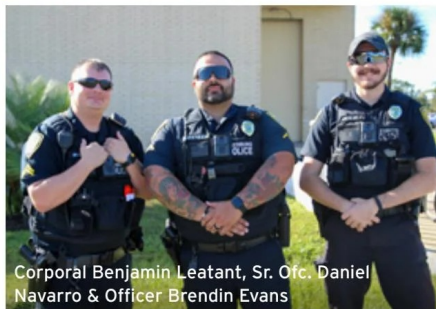
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STOPPING TRAFFIC

@ CLERMONT × PHOTOS: MATTHEW GAULIN

The 4th Annual A21 Walk for Freedom Lake County took place at Lake Sumter State College in Leesburg on October 19. Participants joined the global movement to raise awareness and funds to combat human trafficking. Hosted by A21, a nonprofit dedicated to ending modern slavery, the walk served as a powerful statement against exploitation. After the walk, participants were able to connect with local anti-trafficking organizations, human service groups and front-line professionals to learn more about the crisis and ways to take action. @

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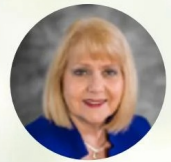
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History-making
sprinter Vanessa
Waite isn't slowing
down—her next goal:
the 2028 Olympics.



PEOPLE

VANESSA WAITE

First she made history—now she's aiming for the Olympics.

STORY: KYLE COPPOLA × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL

Before even entering Lake Minneola High as a freshman this year, Vanessa Waite made history on the track. As a middle schooler, she became the fastest 14-year-old ever in the 200-meter sprint, blazing to a :23.26 finish at the 2024 AAU Junior Olympics. Her record-breaking run earned gold medals in both the 100-meter and 200-meter events, cementing her status as one of the nation's most electrifying young sprinters.

"I was really surprised to see that time," Vanessa says. "I knew I was going to run fast, but I didn't know I was going to run that fast. I was proud to get a personal record and break the record."

Vanessa started running track at age 6, inspired by her older sister Andria, a 400-meter competitor at Florida Gulf Coast University, and Olivia, a junior at Lake Minneola who competes in javelin and shot put. Since the beginning, her father, Randolph Waite, has coached her through years of training and competition with the AAU, a program that offers travel track and field opportunities for young athletes of all skill levels.

"I have been her coach since she was 6," Randolph says. "Many think the journey was easy, but she was at the bottom when she first started. She is just now getting the accolades from the process. So many people think she just got there overnight but they don't see the hard work, countless hours and what she has had to go through."

Beyond athletics, Vanessa excels academically, maintaining a weighted 4.0 GPA while dual-enrolled at Lake-Sumter State College and taking AP classes. She's also involved with the Health Science Collegiate Academy.

Her mother, Eucetia Waite, is one of her biggest supporters.

"I'm super proud," Eucetia says. "I'm the mom who can't watch because I get more nervous than she does. But as a student and an athlete, she balances everything so well."

Vanessa draws inspiration from 2024 Olympic 100-meter gold medalist Julian Alfred, as well as Sha'Carri Richardson and Gabby Thomas. One piece of advice from Sha'Carri particularly resonated with her.

"Sha'Carri told me to focus on my race and not let people get in my head," Vanessa says. "Coming from an Olympic gold medalist, that meant a lot and it's helped me a ton because sometimes I was letting people get to me."

A devout Christian, Vanessa credits her faith in God for her success and often reflects on her favorite Bible verse: Romans 5:3-5 which speaks about endurance and character.

"Endurance produces character, and character produces hope," Vanessa says. "A person's character is important because it defines how others see them."

Vanessa's goals include medaling in the 100-meter and 200-meter at the FHSAA state championships and placing in the top three at major events like the Pepsi Florida Relays and New Balance Nationals.

Her ultimate dream is to qualify for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. 🇺🇸



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PEOPLE

COUPER GATCH

Fueling Eustis baseball with legacy and love for the game.

STORY: KYLE COPPOLA × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL

For Couper Gatch, baseball is more than a game—it's a passion rooted in family and tradition. The Eustis High School senior has been playing the sport since he was 6 years old. Now, he leads his varsity baseball team, serving as captain for the second consecutive year.

As the fourth generation of the Gatch family to call their Eustis farm home, Couper blends the pride of his heritage with the determination to excel on the diamond.

"My aunt Rhonda was a huge Atlanta Braves fan," Couper says. "Her love for the game rubbed off on me. I started throwing the ball around the house and even over the barn, and that's when I fell in love with baseball."

That love turned into a talent that has taken Couper far. As a pitcher and outfielder, he's a versatile player with standout stats. Clocked at 95 mph on the mound and throwing 98 mph from the outfield, Couper's arm strength is one of his greatest assets. Last season, as a junior, he batted .309 with 19 RBIs while recording 46 strikeouts in 35 2/3 innings on the mound. This year, he's aiming even higher.

"My goal is to throw over 70 strikeouts this season," Couper says.

His efforts have paid off, earning him a spot to continue his academic and athletic career at Eastern Florida State College.

"I am very excited to continue playing and my goal is to make an NCAA Division 1 roster in the coming years," Couper says.

Couper attributes much of his success to the support of his parents, Sadie and Eugene, as well as the guidance of Eustis High baseball coach Tony Thomas.

"Without my parents, I wouldn't be where I am today," Couper says. "They've helped me mentally and have guided me to make the right decisions in life. And Coach Thomas never lets us take a day off. He's taught us the value of commitment and hard work."

When he's not on the field, Couper can often be found on the water. An avid fisherman, he's a part of the Lake County Teen Sportfishing Association and is preparing for the state championships. His largest catch—a bass weighing 11.5 pounds—remains a point of pride.

But for Couper, the common thread between his pursuits is effort and perseverance.

That lesson has stuck with Couper throughout his journey. He

even has the phrase written on his mirror as a daily reminder of the effort needed to succeed.

"Coach Thomas always tells us that the game isn't just about talent—it's about what you put into it, day in and day out," Couper says. "Baseball is 90% mental, and you have to want it. You can have all the physical tools in the world, but if your mindset isn't there, you're not going to succeed." 🧠



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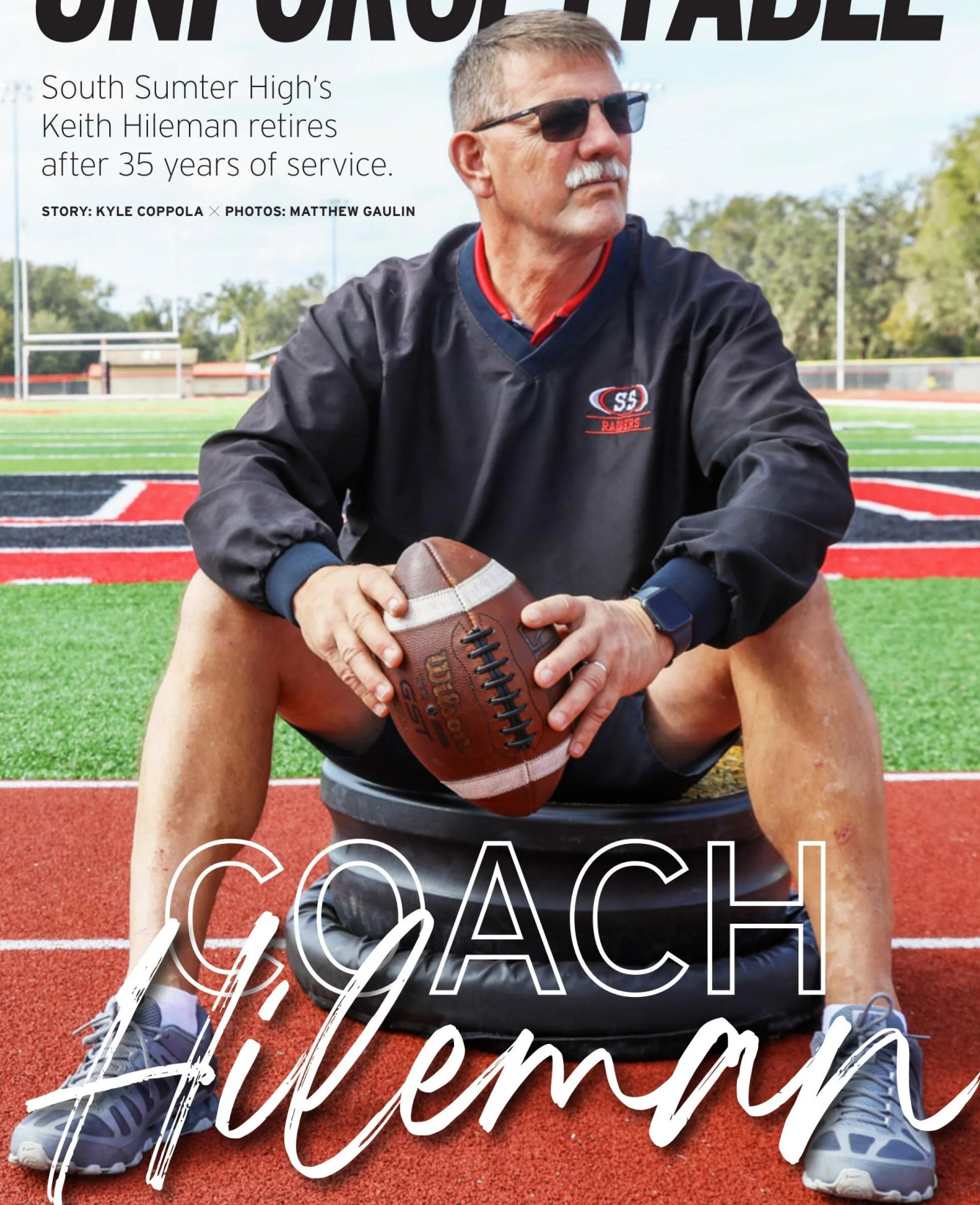
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The UNFORGETTABLE

South Sumter High's
Keith Hileman retires
after 35 years of service.

STORY: KYLE COPPOLA × PHOTOS: MATTHEW GAULIN



COACH

Hileman

Standing on the South Sumter High School football field, Keith Hileman let the memories wash over him. The roar of the crowd, the dedication of the players and the countless moments that defined more than three decades of service filled his mind.

"A lot of history happened here," Hileman says. "But what makes me most grateful is seeing all the kids who graduated from here coming back to serve the community. That's what it's all about."

After 35 years as a coach, teacher and mentor, Hileman is retiring, leaving behind a legacy that has shaped generations in Bushnell. His impact extends far beyond the field or the weight room—it's etched into the culture and traditions of South Sumter High School.

A CAREER BORN OF OPPORTUNITY

Hileman's career in education began in 1990 after he and his wife Debbie moved to Bushnell from the Midwest. The couple had taken a chance on Florida after Hileman left a feed mill job in Nebraska.

"My wife was teaching in Nebraska, and I was working in the mill," Hileman explains. "We decided to take a shot at coming to Florida. A week before school started, I got a call from Inman Sherman, the athletic director, and Bob Edwards, the principal at the time. They needed a teacher and a coach. I got lucky. I was ready to go on unemployment, but instead, I ended up at South Sumter."

What started as a hopeful leap turned into a career filled with purpose. Hileman began coaching football in 1991 and later expanded to basketball, track and field, and even softball.

"I've been coaching football for 35 years, basketball for 26 years, and I spent about 10 years with track and a few with softball," he says. "For the last eight years, I've also been the athletic director and took over after Inman Sherman retired."

"COACHING IS A SPECIAL THING. IT CREATES A BOND THAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER. YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER."

Throughout his career, Hileman has seen South Sumter grow and change, but one thing has remained constant—the strength of its community.

"South Sumter is unique in that people stay," he says. "Our administration, teachers, and coaches are dedicated to this place. It's not like other schools where there's a lot of turnover."

People spend generations here, and that's special."

The school's motto, "Tradition Never Graduates," holds a deep meaning for Hileman.

"The coolest thing is seeing former students come back," he says. "We've had Clinton Hart and Keanu Neal have extensive careers in the NFL. A.J. Bryant played here and is now the varsity basketball coach. They all gravitate back to South Sumter and the area because this place is home. It's something that keeps the legacy alive."

Hileman has also been a part of the school's evolution. For 33 years, he personally painted the lines on the football field, a labor of love that took hours in the blazing Florida sun.

"Every line, every marker—I painted them by hand," he recalls with a chuckle. "They were going to get a Turf Tank robot to do it a few years back, but the county decided to invest in a turf field instead. It's been great for the kids, and I don't miss all that time out there in the heat!"





"COACHING, *Teaching* AND BUILDING BONDS—IT DOESN'T GET BETTER THAN THAT."



While the new facilities are a welcome change, the bonds he's built with students and colleagues mean the most.

"Coaching is a special thing," he says. "It creates a bond that brings people together. You feel like you're part of something bigger."

THE INFLUENCE OF MENTORSHIP

Hileman credits much of his success to the guidance of

Sherman, the legendary South Sumter football coach and athletic director who gave him his first opportunity.

"Sherman is the reason I stayed here so long," Hileman says. "When I was young, I told him, 'Whatever you want me to coach, tell me how to do it, and I'll coach it that way.' That trust meant

everything. Over the years, we had our disagreements, but we always worked through them. After a tough day, we'd go out for dinner and talk it over. That bond kept us going."

Even after Sherman's retirement in 2016, Hileman carried on the same philosophy, building trust and developing young athletes.

"When coach Ty Lawrence took over from Sherman, we took those same concepts and built on them," Hileman says. "We know what to look for in kids, and that's helped us grow. This year, we had five kids commit to NCAA Division I programs. That's a

testament to the hard work everyone puts in."

A LEGACY OF IMPACT

Hileman's influence isn't limited to athletics. Over the years, he's taught countless students, instilling the same values of discipline, hard work and respect.

"We've had Harvard lawyers, veterinarians, scientists, you name it," he says. "You get out of education what you put into it, and South Sumter offers kids the opportunity to succeed. The community here makes that possible."

As Hileman prepares to retire, he's taking time to reflect on the people who made his journey possible, starting with his wife, Debbie.

"She's the backbone of our family," Hileman says. "She stuck with me through all the long hours and raised our kids while I was coaching. She has supported me every step of the way. We're looking forward to spending more time together and seeing what's next."

While retirement will bring a new chapter for Hileman, his love for South Sumter High School will never fade.

"I've had the best job in the world," he says. "Coaching, teaching, and building bonds—it doesn't get better than that. But it's time. I'm ready to retire and see what life holds outside of the classroom and the field."

As he prepares to step away, Hileman remains confident in South Sumter's future.

"The school has a fine future ahead," he says. "The kids and administration here are special, and the community makes it all work. I feel lucky to have been a part of it." 

welcome home

volume 14 // issue 2

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about this
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Lynn Haynes

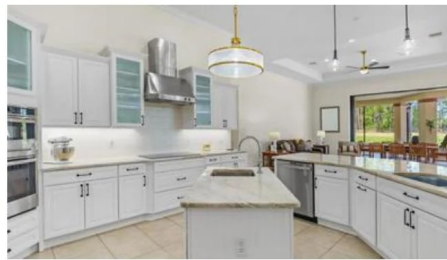
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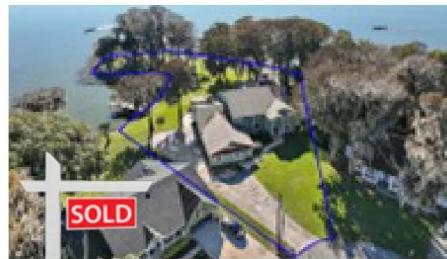
WELCOME TO YOUR OWN SECLUDED OASIS! Custom built in 2013, this prestigious five-bedroom, three full and two half bathrooms estate home sits gracefully on over five acres of gated privacy at the end of a tranquil cul de sac, offering a mesmerizing wooded view. Unwind in your secluded sanctuary, featuring walk-in closets and a cozy sitting room that opens up to the pool area. Host unforgettable gatherings poolside, where you can relax in the spa or indulge in outdoor cooking at the fully equipped kitchen. With a convenient pool bath, you and your guests can enjoy comfort and convenience throughout the festivities. For the car enthusiasts or those with recreational vehicles, the three-car garage offers ample space to store your beloved toys and vehicles securely.



STUNNING, CUSTOM-BUILT SPANISH-STYLE POOL HOME spans over 4,000 sq. ft. of living space and boasts a total square footage just shy of 8,000 sq. ft. Nestled on 5.18 acres in the beautiful Sunnyside area, it offers an exceptional blend of elegance, comfort, and entertainment. A grand porte-cochere driveway welcomes you, setting the tone for the private resort ambiance that awaits. The breathtaking pool area spans over 3,000 sq. ft., designed for ultimate relaxation and entertaining. It features a large spa, a stone fireplace, and plenty of space for gatherings of any size. The outdoor kitchen is a chef's dream, complete with a 48" professional range top and a 24" under-counter refrigerator. Inside, the formal living room impresses with stunning tray ceilings, a bar with an under-counter refrigerator and wine cooler, a beautiful gas fireplace, and 10-ft tall sliding glass doors positioned at a striking corner angle—creating a unique architectural design. The kitchen is truly the heart of the home, featuring quartzite countertops, a large island with a sink and seating, and seamless flow into the living area. A second set of massive 10-foot tall sliding doors completely disappear, making indoor-outdoor living seamless.



DIRECT OCEAN FRONT 3/3 LUXURY CONDO in the highly desirable Malibu building with garage parking, pool, spa and fitness center. Malibu has twenty-nine condos ranging in size from 2000 to 2226 square feet with well operated HOA and monthly fees of only \$700 which include Cable TV, Insurance, Maintenance Exterior, Maintenance Grounds, Recreational Facilities, Pool and Spa, Security and Trash. You'll enjoy your time here whether you live here full time, visit as a weekend get away or use as a rental investment. Owners may have pets and lease for a minimum of one week.



CUSTOM LAKE FRONT home on a PENINSULA that has breath taking views of Lake Eustis at the end of a cul de sac on .96 of an acre with over 540 feet on Lake Eustis. From the moment you enter the foyer you will appreciate the open floor plan, fine finishes, attention to detail and the lake VIEWS from almost every room. You will enjoy luxury in this five bedroom home with a BOAT HOUSE, four car garage and four bathrooms that has been updated.



EXPERIENCE WATERFRONT LIVING at its finest in this stunning POOL HOME with direct access to the CHAIN OF LAKES.. Nestled on OVER AN ACRE along Lake Beauclaire, this property is free from HOA restrictions and deed limitations, giving you the freedom and space for all your boats, RVs, and other recreational toys. Enjoy beautiful pool views from the kitchen, living room, and breakfast nook, and step through French doors to your expansive pool area, ideal for relaxation or entertaining with a convenient pool bath nearby.



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GOLF COURSE FRONTAGE OASIS! Stunning 3-bed, 2-bath pool home in gated Harbor Hills. Over 2,100 sq. ft. on an oversized lot with breathtaking 17th fairway views. Features include a remodeled kitchen with quartz countertops, soft close drawers, porcelain tile, split floor plan, soaring ceilings, Florida Room and a screened-in pool with brick paver patio. Optional golf and social memberships available. Your dream home awaits—schedule your showing today! **\$484,000.**



FALL IN LOVE with this charming 3-bedroom, 2-bath home featuring a freshly painted exterior and a brand-new roof (to be installed before closing). Inside, enjoy vaulted ceilings, engineered wood floors, a cozy gas fireplace, and an open kitchen perfect for entertaining. The primary suite offers dual closets and a walk-in shower, while the screened lanai and brick paver patio overlook a fenced backyard made for Florida living. Optional HOA includes pool and boat dock access for just \$1,200/year. **\$329,000.**



WELCOME HOME TO LAKE YALE ESTATES—a charming community nestled along the scenic shores of Lake Yale! Whether you're searching for a year-round retreat or a cozy winter getaway, this turnkey 3-bedroom, 2-bath home is the perfect find. Everything in the home stays! Sitting on a double lot with a newer roof and offering just over 1,400 sq. ft. of living space, all that's missing is you! **\$245,000.**



Meticulously Maintained 2-Bed, 2-Bath Gem—You Own the Land! Perfect as a year-round home or winter retreat, this property offers exceptional value and convenience. Features include vaulted ceilings, laminate wood flooring (no carpet), an open living and dining area, and a newly added 14x25 Florida Room with A/C. The primary suite boasts an ensuite bath with a walk-in shower, while the oversized carport, screened lanai with laundry room, and backyard shed add functionality. Upgrades include a propane generator, new windows, roof, A/C, and more. Low HOA covers water and trash. **\$209,000.**



BIG. OPEN. CONVENIENT. Three virtues of a truly remarkable home! From the moment you pull into the brick paver driveway, you'll find over 3,000 reasons to say yes to this home. Offering 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, and over 3,000 sq. ft. of thoughtfully designed living space. Step inside and prepare to be floored—literally! The open-concept layout is designed for effortless everyday living and entertaining. A dedicated office/den greets you at the entrance, leading seamlessly into the heart of the home. **\$515,000.**



MAINTENANCE-FREE LIVING IN SANDALWOOD! Beautifully updated 2/2 first-floor condo in the Sandalwood community. Nearly everything is brand-new, from wood plank tile floors and fresh paint to a sleek kitchen with soft-close cabinets, quartz countertops, and stainless appliances. Wood-burning fireplace, perfect for relaxing evenings! Bathrooms boast modern finishes, while the primary suite includes an ensuite bath and new plush carpet. Updates include new windows, a water heater, and more. HOA covers water, sewer, pest control, landscaping, pool, clubhouse, and gym access. **\$159,000.**



LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT ADDITION TO YOUR INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO? Look no further! This is your chance to own TWO homes for the price of ONE, located side by side and already tenant-occupied. With built-in rental income, this opportunity combines convenience and profitability like no other. Conveniently located to shopping and Hwy 27. **\$169,000.**



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WATERFRONT LOT ON THE CHAIN OF LAKES in Lake Harris Shores waterfront community. HOA fees are only 500.00 a year, includes water once you are hooked up to the private community well. Septic needed. Lot is 70x150. Build your new home and enjoy the florida lifestyle on the water. Community clubhouse with activities. Close to downtown tavares and mount dora. **\$299,900.**

Jo Leen Cooper Howe

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The Results Will Move You!



CANAL FRONT ON THE CHAIN OF LAKES-2 Bedroom 2 bath split plan home on canal leading to Little Lake Harris. Open and bright!! Freshly painted inside, new flooring, and new roof in 2019. Oversized 2 car garage. Boat house with boat lift. Home is very close to the opening of Little Lake Harris. The HOA fee is only 700.00 a year which also includes your water for the whole year. **WATERFRONT CLUB HOUSE AND GAZEBO TO ENJOY THOSE SUNSETS. PRIVATE BOAT RAMP.** Located close to the Florida Turnpike and just 10 minutes away to the Tavares Waterfront Seaplane park and unique restaurants and only 15 minutes away from downtown Mount Dora with quaint shopping and a variety of restaurants. Enjoy boating on the CHAIN OF LAKES TO ENJOY EATING OUT OR THOSE BEAUTIFUL SUNSETS. FISH FROM YOUR OWN BACK YARD. **\$375,000.**



WELCOME TO SUNSET BOULEVARD

The dream come true of homes! This waterfront estate is **ONE OF A KIND!** Situated on over 3 pristine acres with privacy walls on both sides of the property, this luxury home welcomes you down a gated, long driveway to the gorgeous paver portico with tongue and groove ceilings and built in surround sound that is all through out the whole home. As you enter through the double door entry way, be prepared to say **WOW!** You will immediately fall in love with the stunning views of the lake with the open floor plan and ceiling to floor glass windows in the great room plus the custom massive staircase and eye catching gas fireplace. Almost all of the rooms in the house have that same beautiful lake view. The layout of this house was strategically thought about with privacy for each room. There are 4 bedrooms downstairs and 2 bedrooms upstairs that each have a bathroom to accommodate them. The primary bedroom will make it hard to want to leave with the spectacular views of the lake, the private sitting balcony, the gas fireplace for enjoying on those cool evenings and the large bathroom with walk in shower and relaxing garden bath. **\$3,600,000.**



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5



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Licensed Real Estate Agent

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This stunningly renovated home combines comfort, contemporary style, and serene living in one perfect package. Nestled in a quiet community, this 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom gem is an ideal retreat for those seeking modern, low-maintenance living paired with breathtaking water views and convenient access to all the amenities you could hope for. **MLS# G5093106**



NEW ROOF - 2021, NESTLED ON A STUNNING 14.87-ACRE LOT! This custom-built home presents endless opportunities and potential. Featuring a spacious floor plan, the property includes a closed-in garage that can easily be transformed into an additional bedroom or a bonus room, offering even more living space. With just a few interior updates, this home could become the dream home you've been searching for. **MLS# #G5093281.**



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION! Nestled on a quiet cul-de-sac, this one-owner gem offers unbeatable proximity to top-rated schools, shopping, dining, and hospitals, with Disney and other theme parks just 30 minutes away. Boasting a brand-new roof and gutters (2022), an irrigation well, and prewired low-voltage cabling, exterior of the home was painted in 2022. This well-cared-for home is packed with value. **MLS# G5094013.**



EQUESTRIAN LOVERS DREAM HOME

7 ACRE ESTATE!
Welcome home to your "Working Horse Ranch" with relaxed country living being sold Fully Furnished "Turnkey". This Immaculate 6 Stall Horse Barn features, tack room, 6 stalls, corral round pin, extra storage & full bathroom with a walk-in shower plus outside patio area with full RV hook up with electric & sewer! Meticulous Estate features Two Homes.



\$2,250,000.



17.5 WOODED ACRES of lakefront property on Lake Deaton. This is a rare opportunity to purchase this large of a parcel directly on an approximately 500 acre Lake. This offering is for two parcels, Sumter County ID: G23-050 and G23-022, currently zoned RR5 within Sumter County. The adjacent property is zoned R2M, so the same zoning could be assigned to these two parcels. Upon rezoning, the property could yield seven lakefront lots at almost 80' wide, then with roads and drainage, the remaining land could possibly be divided into 18 interior one half acre lots, this is a concept only and has not been approved. Imagine the potential this type of development could have! It may be possible to seek proper zoning for a lakefront RV park. All information provided must be confirmed by the buyer. **\$2,400,000.** Contact Judd for more information.

Judd
Dickerson

352.516.7809

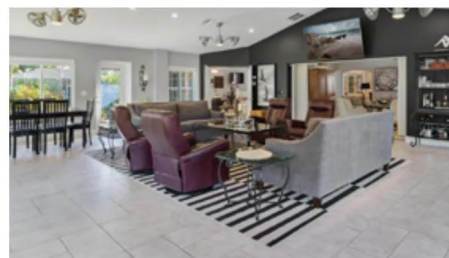
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UNDER CONSTRUCTION New Construction in the highly sought after Hamlin (Horizon West Medical Development. This stunning new building will be coming in January of 2025. Direct Avalon Road frontage with easy access. Orlando Health Horizon West Hospital is only a quarter of a mile away and the new Orlando College of Osteopathic Medicine is approximately one half a mile. Absolute NNN lease with 5-year term minimum. The landlord will contribute \$35 psf for Tenant Improvements. Available units: #110 -3,033 sf #120-1,460 sf, #130-1,300 sf, #140-1,264 sf, #160-1,338 sf. (LEASED) or, contribute adjacent units to fit your needs. **MLS# G5077392 // \$48.00 Per Sq.Ft.** Contact Judd for more information.



EXCEPTIONAL GOLF-FRONTAGE POOL HOME ON .72 ACRE!! Welcome home to your next residence that features a NEW ROOF in year 2021 plus a sparkling screened in pool with Hot Tub! Enjoy a spacious FOUR BEDROOM, 2.5 BATHS plus a 33 x 21 3-CAR GARAGE and separate mud room area with sink and extra refrigerator! This expansive lot has 2 beautiful stately Laurel Oaks, 6 Tropical Palms and stunning views of the 18th Fairway on a Championship Golf Course! STOP SEARCHING AND START LIVING...CALL TODAY! **\$589,247.**



STUNNING GOLF FRONTAGE HOME...HALF ACRE! "Welcome Home" to this exceptional residence, located on the 15th Tee and originally built in 1997 to the highest standards and thoughtfully remodeled and transformed into an impressive showpiece! This Golf Course Home offers an unmatched blend of luxury, comfort, and style, perfect for both entertaining and everyday living. You will love the oversized 2 car garage plus a separate Golf Cart Garage! This home offers an OPTIONAL Social and Club membership for a separate fee unlike other homes in this Golf Community!! **\$675,000**



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AMAZING ONE OF A KIND HOME NOW AVAILABLE!!! FIRST TIME EVER ON MARKET! Lovingly and meticulously maintained by the ORIGINAL OWNER! Located on a beautifully landscaped oversized corner lot with convenient circle driveway, this home features a 3/2 split plan, cozy living room with vaulted wood beam ceilings and beautiful wood burning fireplace. Enjoy your own backyard paradise complete with screened-in swimming pool, paver patio, and built in outdoor kitchen grill. The luxurious master suite is complete with a spacious bedroom and large walk in closet, walk in shower, and double vanity set up. Kitchen features plenty of counterspace and storage, with a wonderful 4 seat breakfast bar looking out to the pool area. NEW ROOF IN 2018. **\$489,000.**



DEVELOPMENT SITE NOW AVAILABLE IN THE VILLAGES AREA! Site consists of two lots comprising the entire corner of US HWY 441 & SE 156TH PL for a total 2.5 +/- ACRES!! Prime location just north of The Villages, located on busy Highway 441 with median cut & an average daily traffic count of 34,000 per day. Great exposure with 300' of HWY 441 frontage. This site is zoned B-2, which allows a multitude of uses including retail, shopping, center, restaurant, warehouse, office, or hotel. All engineering is completed for a 12,000sf building. Surveys for each parcel & St. John Water Management permit also available for review. **\$799,900.**



INVESTOR ALERT! RECENTLY BUILT & 100% LEASED! TWO EXCEPTIONALLY BUILT BLOCK & METAL OFFICE/WAREHOUSES FOR SALE! Both buildings fully leased with annual rent increases and strong successful tenants. Building 1 consists of 11,696 sq ft and was built in 2021, while building 2 consists of 13,440 sq ft and was built in 2023. Total land size is 2.5+/- acres with 58 parking spaces. High quality office buildouts in each unit. Great visibility on Tally Rd. **\$5,000,000.**



VERY ATTRACTIVE AND TURNKEY! 5,300 sq ft professional office space for lease! Most recently occupied by state agency. updated with brand new carpet and paint throughout as well as high speed data lines, LED lighting, PA system that includes white noise, security and fire alarms and the building is fully sprinkled. Space would be ideal for a customer service or call center, institutional, or corporate headquarters. The building also features a kitchen/breakroom area and great parking with easy access. **\$12/per Sq. Ft.**



RARE OPPORTUNITY! Just under 40,000 sq ft industrial office warehouse on just under 2.5 acres located in busy and growing Leesburg. Concrete block construction with 2 grade level 16x16 doors as well as two semi truck loading/unloading dock spaces. There are 7-8 offices, 3 restrooms, two kitchenette/break room areas, and a good portion of the warehouse/assemble areas are also air conditioned. Building is fully fire-sprinkled, ceiling heights are approximately 17 ft, and property is serviced with city water, sewer, and 3 phase electric. **\$3,200,000.**



ATTENTION INVESTORS! Historic landmark Leesburg bar and poolhall with restaurant and outdoor venue pavilion is up for sale! **THIS SALE INCLUDES A 4COP LIQUOR LICENSE.** Majority of fixtures, furniture and equipment will convey with sale, along with inventory. Downtown Leesburg is growing fast, don't miss this opportunity! Historic main building consists of approximately 4,550+/- sq ft indoor restaurant/kitchen, full bar, and pool hall, all tastefully renovated over the years and well maintained. There is also an outdoor bar, and a 2,000+/- sq ft covered pavilion and bandstand area with additional kitchen and restroom for outdoor events that was completed in 2011. **\$1,000,000.**



13.28 ACRES w/860ft highway frontage on US 27/441, the only 6 Lane Highway through the Villages, Florida. Virtually the only piece of vacant land of this size in the area which is totally on level ground, at roadside eye level. Can be seen from 1000 feet away. City utilities available. St Johns Water Management permit obtainable, to expedite build out. Massive billboard highly visible. Likely traffic light at NE corner. Nearly 30,000 vehicles pass daily. Zoned PUD-Industrial with C-2 uses also allowed. **\$3,580,000**

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WELCOME HOME to this charming, beautifully maintained, one-owner, four-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath traditional brick home in the heart of Wildwood, Florida. Spacious and thoughtfully designed, it features a formal living room, a formal dining room, and a cozy family room complete with a wood-burning fireplace that opens to a versatile enclosed Florida room. The kitchen is both functional and charming, boasting solid countertops, a spacious pantry, a built-in desk, and a delightful breakfast nook with a bay window—perfect for birdwatching or nurturing houseplants. An additional 340+/-square-foot bonus room provides ample space for a game room, playroom, or home office. The master suite includes a private bath and generous closet space, while the guest bath offers double sinks for added convenience. **\$425,000.**

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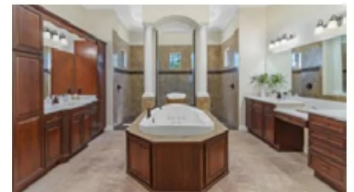
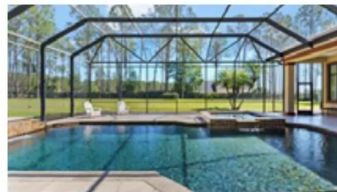
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Let Lindsay Lead You Home



THIS BEAUTIFUL 3-BEDROOM, 2-BATH HOME backs up to a serene retention pond offering peace and quiet. Features include a new roof, newer AC, plantation shutters, no carpet, solid wood kitchen cabinets, a lanai, and a birdcage for enjoying Florida living.



NOT EVERYONE CAN HAVE A RESORT-STYLE POOL in their backyard—but you could be one of the few. This stunning estate sits on over 5 acres, blending luxury, comfort, and seamless indoor-outdoor living. With over 3,000 square feet of poolside space, soaring 12+ ft ceilings, and two bars, it's designed for both relaxation and entertaining. The spa-like primary bath features a two-person jetted tub and a massive rainfall shower, creating your own private retreat.

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SENSATIONAL HOME...AFFORDABLE PRICE! Enjoy this immaculate "move in ready" home feeling safe and secure in a guard gated golf community with sidewalks for your walking pleasure! Enter foyer to a spacious open concept home, "light and bright" with the feeling of the outdoors brought inside. This 3bed/2.5bath home with 2,100sqft is a must see! **\$425,000.**

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Smith

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LOCATED IN A SOUGHT OUT AFTER ALL AGE NEIGHBORHOOD! Home features a popular open concept design with 3bedrooms and 2baths and 1,528 Sqft. The Groves at Harbor Hills is known for its pride of ownership with a lower HOA fee where rentals are limited and optional social and golf memberships are available. **\$312,900.**



GOLF FRONTAGE UNIQUE "ONE OF A KIND" CUSTOM HOME! Half acre, beautiful park-like setting located on the 11th green! New roof installed in June 2021 and HVAC REPLACED in 2023. Replacement of hot water heater & home re-plumbed in year 2016!! Nestled within a prestigious guard-gated golf community offering 24/7 security, this home welcomes you with a meticulously manicured lawn, majestic oak trees, and an inviting stone pillar entrance with leaded glass double doors. **\$548,200.**



POOL HOME...GUARD GATED GOLF COMMUNITY! New Roof coming soon on this Custom-designed home that offers 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, plus a spacious den/ office presently being used as a recreation room... This home's timeless split-floor plan features beautiful hardwood and slate flooring, paired with graceful arched entryways. The extended lanai/ pool area is perfect for outdoor relaxation offering scenic views and lots of hedge privacy! The custom-designed solar heated pool is surrounded by slip-resistant decorative tile, making it an ideal oasis for both entertaining and unwinding. DO NOT HESITATE...CALL TODAY! **\$450,000.**



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BEAUTIFULLY MAINTAINED and loved home in the sought after Scottish Highland's community in Leesburg. Two bedrooms, two baths with a separate dining area, 15x14 bonus room and Florida room. Great open feel in this home. Home is move in ready! **\$209,500.**



BRAND NEW ROOF! Enjoy peace of mind with a brand-new roof installed in March 2025. This charming 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home is nestled in the highly sought-after, gated golf community of Harbor Hills. Complete with a two-car garage plus a golf cart garage, this home offers both convenience and comfort. Step inside to find a light and bright interior with an inviting open-concept design and a split-bedroom layout for added privacy. The spacious living and dining area features high ceilings, elegant crown molding, and French doors that lead to the screened back lanai—perfect for enjoying Florida's beautiful weather. Don't miss this opportunity to call this stunning property home! **\$349,500.**



STUNNING HOME IN HARBOR HILLS COUNTRY CLUB! The highly sought-after Canary model features four bedrooms, three bathrooms, and tons of natural light. This gem is located on a serene lot near the cul-de-sac, and close to the back gate entrance for easy access. Upgraded throughout, this home features a gourmet kitchen with recent appliances, including an induction stove with convection oven, soft-close cabinets, a farmhouse sink, under-cabinet and additional task lighting, and two customized pantry closets one of which is climate-controlled with hanging pot racks. Fully recessing window-sliders open the living and dining areas to a screened, paver patio to enjoy seamless indoor/outdoor living and entertaining. **\$499,900.**

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ONE OF A KIND PROPERTY! This incredible home situated on a spring fed private lake and 6+ acres has everything you can think of and more! As you enter the majestic oak tree property down the long paved driveway, you immediately will fall in love with layout of the land and the glistening of the lakefront. Upon entering the front door, again the lake view will ABSOLUTELY WOW you along with the open floor plan. Large living room with double french doors leading to the screened in back patio has a wood burning fireplace, cathedral ceilings and wood panel accent wall. **MLS#G5090998 / \$1,050,000.**

Lauren Fickett

Realtor®

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Lauren@MorrisRealtors.com

Leave It To Lauren!



STUNNING NEW CUSTOM BUILT HOME IS NOW AVAILABLE! Be prepared to say WOW the moment you drive into the beautiful oversized driveway and notice all the attention to detail that was put into this house. Upon entering through the front door you will love the open floor plan with tongue and groove ceilings, oversized stone fireplace and gorgeous concrete floors through out. The kitchen is simply a dream with the custom wood cabinets and accents, an 11 ft island, stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, butlers pantry and dinette. The kitchen/dining combo overlooking the living area is perfect for entertaining. Need to work from home or want the perfect desk area to do homework? There is even a built in work station area. Anyone would love to do laundry in this large laundry room with tons of storage cabinets as well. Romantic primary suite with tray ceilings leads to the large bathroom complete with claw foot tub, glass shower, separate vanities and oversized walk in closets. Split bedroom plan for the additional bedrooms 2 and 3. Guest bath features double sinks and tub/shower combo. The back porch is where you will want to spend your evenings enjoy the cool breeze with living/dining area back there as well. Plenty of room for you to add your dream pool!!! Another perk is the whole house Generac 20KW generator should you loose power. This amazing home is just a few miles to all of The Villages amenities such as hospital, restaurants, shopping and more! Do not miss your opportunity at this one! It is definitely a beauty! **MLS#G5084330 / \$1,375,000.**



UPGRADES GALORE! Welcome to 50 Highland Avenue in the heart of Umatilla. This home has been extensively renovated. NEW ROOF! As you are welcomed home, you will notice right away the large fully fenced lot the home is located on. NO HOA! Upon entering through the front door you will immediately love the open, light and bright floor plan. **w / \$375,000.**



BRING YOUR BOAT AND FISHING POLES! Located just one house in on the canal right off of Lake Eustis, this 3 bedroom 2 bath home is now available! NO HOA! This home has every fishermen's dream dock with large boat house/ hoist. You can enjoy boating to all of the amazing restaurants on the chain of lakes right from your back yard. This home is also located just minutes to shopping, hospitals and so much more! Call today to start living your waterfront dream tomorrow! **MLS# G5093163 / \$325,000**



FARM SWEET FARM! Situated on 1.63 acres and built in 2020, this adorable home makes for the perfect homestead. Gated entrance, new privacy fence on parts of the property and wide open are some of the lot features you notice right upon entering through the front entrance. From the moment you walk into the home you will love the light, bright and open floor plan. NO HOA! Love boating? You are just a few miles to the St. Johns boat ramp. Another huge plus is that this homestead backs up to state land!! This amazing place is one to act fast on! It won't last long! **MLS#G5093097 / \$375,000.**

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THIS BEAUTIFUL, WELL MAINTAINED HOME HAS EVERYTHING NEEDED Just bring your personal items, a few groceries and you're ready to start living in "sunshine state", or your retirement or second home, look no further than here. Inside utility, large kitchen with lots of light, all appliances, plus dishes, pots, pans small appliances, silverware all the essentials of a kitchen. Master bedroom has large walk-in closet with shelving, master bath with high rise commode, shower with glass doors. Guest bath includes shower, tub combo. **\$162,400.**



GRACIOUS AND WELCOMING HOME

Located in the lovely community of Coachwood East in Leesburg, Florida. Charming 2 bedroom 2 bath manufactured home in 55+ community is move in ready. This welcoming home has 1,248 +/- sq ft of living area, features a large bright and airy Florida room, perfect for enjoying the sunshine. Inside utility/office/hobby room an extra space for your needs. **\$149,500.**

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Home Inspections



Lena Williams

Realtor®

352.636.4488

Lena@MorrisRealtors.com

Lena Sells!



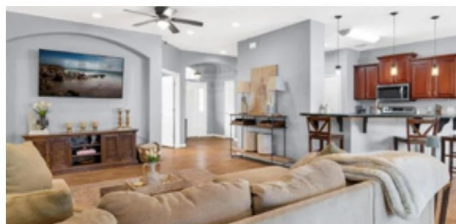
EXPERIENCE THE CHARM OF MODERN LIVING in this beautiful brand new home, featuring fresh paint, new fixtures, and sleek vinyl wood flooring throughout. The kitchen is a highlight, offering quartz countertops and premium appliances. Step inside to an open floor plan with vaulted ceilings, creating a spacious and elegant atmosphere. With three comfortable bedrooms and two stylish bathrooms, there's plenty of room for everyone. The master suite, separated from the guest rooms for added privacy, boasts a glass-enclosed shower and dual quartz-topped sinks. Don't miss the opportunity to call this brand-new home your own—schedule a viewing today and start your next chapter in comfort and style. Enjoy peace of mind with the included builder's warranty. **\$329,000.**



LADY LAKE LIVING AT IT'S BEST! Welcome to this stunning three bedroom home in the beautiful Oak Pointe community located in lovely Lady Lake. This custom beauty offers an open and airy floor plan with high-end finishes throughout. The spacious master suite features a tray ceiling, a luxurious en-suite bath with a custom tile shower, double sinks, beautiful granite countertops, and a large walk-in closet. Additional storage includes a linen closet within the master bath. **\$499,900.**



HOME SWEET HOME! Amazing Villages Camden Designer Home in Sabal Chase with No Bond! Located in the desirable Village of Sabal Chase, this beautiful three-bedroom, two-bathroom home sits on a spacious corner lot with a fantastic flowing floor plan. The open-concept kitchen, dining, and family room create a welcoming space, with a convenient breakfast bar perfect for casual dining. **\$399,900.**



WELCOME HOME TO THIS SILVER LAKE BEAUTY! This home offers 3/2 with a split floorplan and a bonus den/office. Featuring a spacious kitchen with solid surface countertops, cherry cabinets, and a built-in desk area, this home is perfect for both cooking and working from home. The home boasts 9' ceilings, rounded corners, and architectural niches that add character and charm. The large living room opens up to a covered, screened-in porch through French doors, creating a seamless indoor-outdoor living experience. The backyard is privacy fenced. The master suite is a highlight, featuring a custom 7x14 walk-in closet and a spacious master bath with both a separate vanity and a dual-sink vanity. Two generously sized guest bedrooms include one with a walk-in closet, and the guest bath features a relaxing jetted tub. This home also includes a spacious inside utility room with a custom built-in landing nook that is perfect for backpacks or work bags. The oversized garage is spacious enough for storing a fishing boat, and extra concrete on the side of the home provides additional parking space. Located in a convenient area close to shopping, a local college, a dog park, restaurants, and more, this home offers both comfort and convenience. Don't miss the chance to make this wonderful property your new home! **\$365,000.**



STUNNING BRAND-NEW HOME! Step into modern comfort with this beautifully designed, brand-new home built by a highly reputable custom home builder. Featuring contemporary color schemes and high-end finishes, this home offers the perfect blend of style and function. Situated in Leesburg, just moments away from Fruitland Park, you'll enjoy a fantastic location with easy access to everything you need. The spacious lot provides a serene backyard, ideal for entertaining or adding a playground or garden, and there's no HOA or monthly fees! Plus, enjoy peace of mind with a builder's warranty included. Don't miss your chance to make this gorgeous home yours—schedule your private showing today and start your next chapter in style! **\$329,000.**



START LIVING YOUR LIFE TODAY Harbor Hills Country Club, 3/4 acre lot with no direct rear neighbors. Views of the signature 10th hole as well as a nice, serene pond. Upon entry, you'll find an open floor plan featuring 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, and a welcoming den, providing plenty of room for family and guests. 2-car garage along with an additional golf cart garage. Expansive covered and screened-in patio. Don't miss out on the opportunity to experience ultimate luxury and tranquility. Call today before this one is gone. **\$434,900.**



DON'T MISS THIS ONE! 2/2 plus a bonus room that could easily be an office or den. The master bedroom has an en-suite bathroom with double sinks and a spacious walk-in closet. The guest bathroom features a stand-up bathtub. The kitchen has a nice breakfast bar and space for a table, plenty of cabinets and counter space and flows nicely from the garage making it easy to drop the groceries! Speaking of garage, this side entry garage has a sealed floor and can house two cars! Close proximity to Spanish Springs square and plenty of food and shopping! **\$314,900.**



DISCOVER YOUR DREAM Home in the Heart of Leesburg! This beautifully maintained three-bedroom, two-bath home offers an ideal blend of comfort and convenience. Situated on a spacious corner lot, you'll love the abundant outdoor space, including a custom-built deck and a screened porch — perfect for relaxation and entertaining. Inside, you'll find fresh paint and new carpeting in two bedrooms. The eat-in kitchen is perfect for casual meals, while the formal dining area provides space for more elegant gatherings. The lush landscaping adds beautiful curb appeal. The roof is only 8 years old! **\$274,000.**

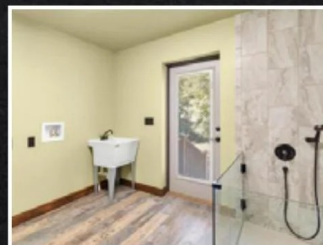
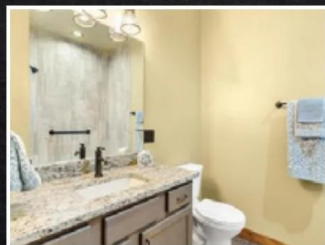
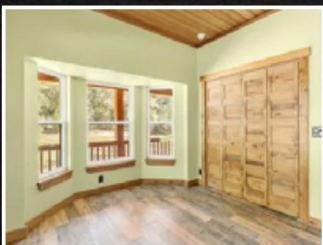
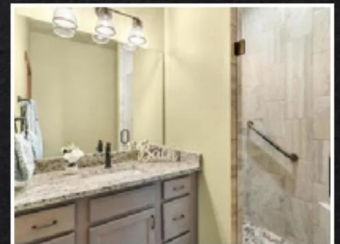
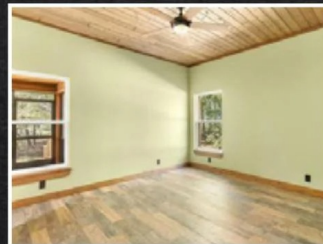
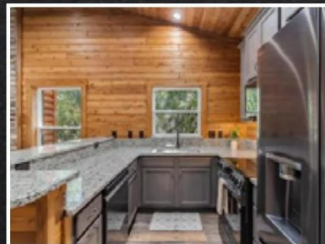


One-of-a-Kind Custom Log Cabin in Beautiful Lady Lake!

Private & Stunning! Nestled on just shy of 10 secluded acres in Lady Lake, just minutes from The Villages, this brand-new, never-lived-in custom log cabin is a rare and stunning find in this area!

PRICED AT: \$699,900

For more information contact [Lena Williams](mailto:Lena@morrisrealtors.com) at 352-636-4488 or Lena@morrisrealtors.com



Morris Realty
& INVESTMENTS

MENU

FOOD
DRINKS
REVIEWS

IN THE KITCHEN

Whispering Oaks Winery in Oxford creates stunning dishes paired with award-winning, fresh blueberry wines.

100



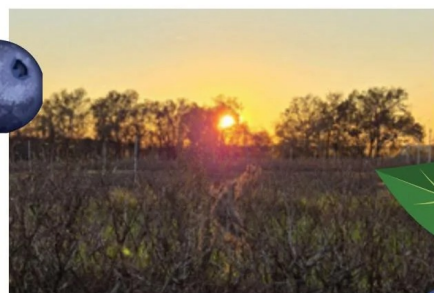
RECIPE

SIPPING THE BLUES

Outpouring of support fortifies
winemaking family's faith in community.

STORY: GINA HORAN × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL





In 2019, *Style Magazine* visited Whispering Oaks Winery in Oxford and discovered the delights of blueberry wine. At the time, the winery was in its first year under the new ownership of Erinn and Darryl Siemer. Six years later, the couple is still hard at work, proving that retirement doesn't always mean slowing down.

Just days before Christmas, an electrical fire destroyed their home, which sat adjacent to the tasting room. It was a devastating blow, but they faced it with resilience.

"We've been through a lot, but this was something else," Darryl says. "You either let it take you down, or you keep moving."

Luckily, their daughter Madeline was still up at school in Tallahassee. Equally as lucky, their son Kannon was there when the fire started because in a moment of instinct, he hurled a boulder through Erinn's office bay window to retrieve her desktop computer.

"We had our pets and kids, and that was all that mattered," Erinn says. "Of all the worse possible scenarios, the best/worst happened."

The loss of their home was a gut punch, but the outpouring of support

from the local community has been overwhelming. Local musician Michael Webb even offered to host a benefit concert to help out.

"That really got to me," Darryl admits. "I don't usually let things hit me that way, but it was humbling and it kind of guilted me into being a better person."

The couple, married for nearly 25 years, met in the mid-90s through a mutual friend.

"We dated for a year, lived together for six or seven, and then got married in 2001, ironically on a farm," Erinn says.

Their transition from a highly successful corporate life to running a winery wasn't planned, but it felt like a natural fit. Darryl, a second-generation blueberry farmer, saw potential in the winery when it went up for sale in 2018.

Florida blueberries are unique in that they are some of the earliest ripening in the country. "Earlier is better," Darryl says. "If Florida blueberries don't get to market quickly, they lose flavor, so timing is everything."

Florida's blueberry industry has flourished thanks to the University of Florida's agricultural research,

particularly its development of Southern highbush blueberries. These varieties thrive in Florida's well-drained, acidic soil and full sun, allowing the state to compete with larger markets.

The state is always among the first two regions in the U.S. to harvest blueberries each season, thanks in large part to meticulous fertilization and UF's research into high-yield, early-ripening cultivars.

Blueberry wine has steadily gained recognition as a premium product, with studies from the University of Florida suggesting it may contain higher levels of antioxidants than traditional red or white wine. Unlike grapes, which rely on wind pollination, blueberries depend on bees.

"People don't realize how critical bees are to our industry," Darryl explains. "To celebrate, we host our Honeybee and Blues Festival each year because it's a way to celebrate the connection between farming, music, and nature."

In partnership with UF, Whispering Oaks created Gator's Game Day Dry, a wine that pays homage to the university's contributions to Florida's blueberry industry. Other offerings



include Wildly Mild, Sensationally Sweet, and Delightfully Dry, each made with antioxidant-rich, hand-harvested blueberries.

"We want to make wines that rival traditional wines but with a Florida twist," Darryl explains. "Blueberries offer something unique. They're packed with antioxidants, and the wine is surprisingly complex."

The winemaking process is meticulous, influenced by research into fermentation and aging techniques that preserve the fruit's natural health benefits. Studies have shown that blueberry wine contains anthocyanins and polyphenols, compounds linked to heart health and reducing inflammation.

"We get a lot of people who are surprised that our wines don't give them headaches," Erinn adds. "Unless you have a blueberry allergy, there's no reason you should feel bad after drinking it."

The winery's commitment to quality is evident in its collaboration with renowned winemaker Dr. Brent Trela, whose expertise has helped develop wines that surprise even the most skeptical customers. They have also won multiple awards over the years, which are displayed throughout the tasting room.

"People hear 'blueberry wine' and assume it's going to be overly sweet," Darryl says. "But then they taste it, and it's a game-changer."

Darryl is also adamant about supporting Florida Grown. "With all the recent loss from the hurricanes and devastation, I want people to understand that when they buy our wine, they are supporting a label maker from Sanford, cork suppliers from Tampa and blueberry farmers like us," he says.

Beyond the wine, Whispering Oaks has evolved into a sought-after agritourism destination. Guests can tour the vineyard, learn about the winemaking process, and enjoy tastings in a relaxed, welcoming environment. The winery also hosts

Dinner Under the Oaks, a beloved outdoor dining experience set by a koi pond and open pit hardwood grill, where visitors gather for great food, wine, and conversation.

Live music has become a staple of the experience and Whispering Oaks hosts diverse, talented musicians who play a range of genres from blues and rock to originals and tribute acts like Elvis, Stevie Ray Vaughn and The Beach Boys.

"Unless there's a tornado, the music goes on," Darryl says.

The venue has also become a popular wedding destination, hosting multiple weddings annually.

"People love the idea of getting married at a winery," Erinn says. "The setting is gorgeous, the wine is flowing, and it just makes for a beautiful day."

Despite the long hours and challenges, the couple remains passionate about what they do.

"It's the hardest thing we've ever done," Erinn admits. "But it's also the most rewarding."

Even after their recent loss, they remain humble and grateful for the land, their family, and the special space they have created.

"At the end of each day, when the gates are closed and we're just together, drinking wine and planning the next business idea, we sit on our little couch in the bridesmaid cottage and watch the beautiful sunset," Erinn says. "It's humbling, and it reminds us that it's all worth it." @

IF
YOU
GO

WHISPERING OAKS WINERY

10934 N. CR 475, Oxford

352.478.0449

winesofflorida.com

For those looking to visit, Whispering Oaks Winery is open daily from 11am-5pm, with extended hours for their Steak Nights and live music events on Fridays and Saturdays.



ABOUT THE CHEF

Chef **Paul McComb** is a culinary artist with a lifelong passion for Italian, French, and American cuisine. With over 30 years of experience in various fine-dining restaurants, Paul brings his skills and passion for rustic dishes and masterful sauces to Whispering Oaks Winery.



PORTABELLA TANGO CREAM SAUCE

This delicious sauce can be served over any protein, vegetable or pasta.

INGREDIENTS:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter
- 1 lb. sliced portabellas
- 1 cup Whispering Oaks Winery Tango wine
- 2 cups heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh basil
- 1 sprig fresh-picked thyme

DIRECTIONS:

Melt butter in a large skillet on medium low heat and sauté mushrooms completely and slowly to color. Simmer until liquid is evaporated and stir in Tango wine and burn-off alcohol. Stir in cream sauce and reduce until thick. Finish by stirring in herbs and serve over steak.

BLUEBERRY COBBLER

Fruit Mixture:

- 2 lb. fresh Florida blueberries
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 Tbsp. cocoa powder
- 2 Tbsp. cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp. corn starch
- pinch of salt

Topping:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup cubed chilled butter



DIRECTIONS:

Blend dry mixture with butter until crumbly. Simmer fruit mixture (without the cornstarch) over medium heat for 20 minutes. Prepare a "slurry" of water and cornstarch. Heat up fruit to a boil then add cornstarch slurry to thicken. Pour hot fruit mixture into a 9 X 13" pan and cover with topping. Bake for 15 minutes at 325° then serve in a coupe glass and top with fresh whipped cream and a sprig of mint.

SALMON AGRODOLCE

Start with 8 oz. wild caught king salmon.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 shallots
- 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 1/2 cups Florida blueberries
- salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

Sauté shallots to clear color then add white wine vinegar, thyme, cinnamon and a pinch of salt. Simmer down until liquid has evaporated, then add the berries, butter and honey. Cook until berries are soft. Grill salmon over hard-wood fire and top with Agrodolce sauce. (This also works with broiled salmon.)



STEAK AU POIVRE

Start with a hearty NY strip or ribeye steak and add a pinch of Kosher salt.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 oz. pink peppercorns, coarse ground and smashed
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 2 sprigs oregano
- 2 oz. diced shallots
- 1 Tbsp. chopped garlic

- 3/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 3/4 cup beef bone stock
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard

DIRECTIONS:

Sauté shallots and peppercorns completely to soften then add cognac and burn off alcohol. Add stock and simmer then stir in cream until reduced. Whisk in Dijon mustard. Coat steak with peppercorns then cook to temp over hardwood fire. Pour Au Poivre over steak.

Hey, readers! Do you have favorite recipes or know a chef we should profile?

→ Comment on this article or send story ideas to gina@akersmediagroup.com.



GINA HORAN



REVIEW

They had a dream

Discover how two couples brought the heart and soul of Mexico to Clermont.

STORY: ROXANNE BROWN × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL

Lour longtime friends and entrepreneurs turned their shared vision into reality with Cantina's Mexican Kitchen, a vibrant and popular Clermont restaurant. Ivan Mauricio and Nora Mendez, owners of Stone Experts in Tavares, and Jaime Solis and Lucia Alvarado, owners of Solal Painting in DeLand, first entertained the idea when a casual conversation after a soccer game between Ivan and Jaime led to the realization that they both had dreamed of opening a restaurant.

"So many nights, I'd tell my wife, 'One day I'll have a restaurant that brings people together,'" Ivan recalls. Jaime had also dreamed of it but had never found the right business partner. "I've been friends with Ivan for years, so when I found out we were on the same page, I felt working together

would be a blessing," he says. "I knew it was the right time."

That conversation quickly turned into action. The two couples pooled their skills to create a welcoming space where customers and employees feel at home.

"I always imagined a place where customers are treated like family," Jaime says. "We also have a good team, and it's very important that they feel we care about them, too."

Nora says she's proud of what they've built.

"We're committed to serving our community with care and passion every day," she says. "We want our guests to come in, enjoy a meal and feel like they're becoming part of the family."

With the unwavering support of their wives, the team transformed



an old space into a modern yet cozy restaurant. Together, the couples knocked down walls, laid flooring, built tabletops and counters, painted the walls — you name it.

A beautiful mural proudly showcases their Zacatecas heritage, honoring their deep Mexican roots and the restaurant's colorful yet classy décor that lends itself to the happy, festive vibe, felt inside and out on the porch.

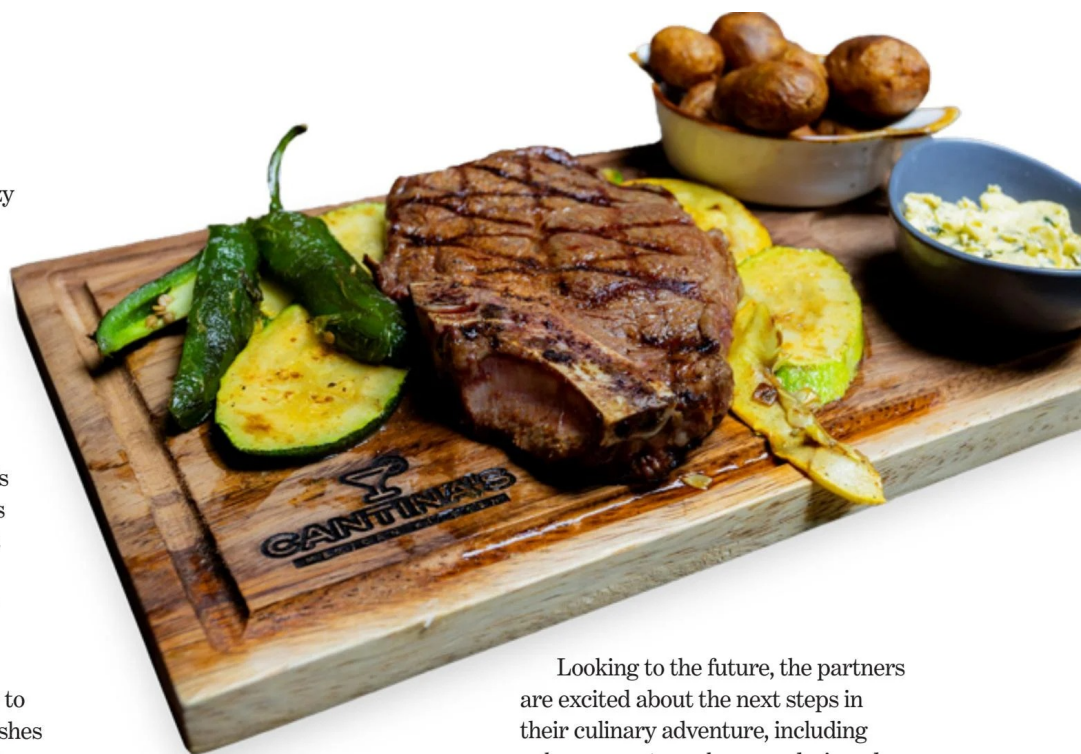
"We support our husbands, our dreamers, in whatever ways we can," Lucia says.

As for food, Cantina's stays true to authenticity, serving traditional dishes made only using the highest quality ingredients. Nora says Mexican staples like refried beans are made fresh every day from pinto beans they simmer every night. The kitchen crew never uses frozen ingredients and instead of cooking huge batches of side items like their rice, they make smaller batches as needed to ensure it always tastes fluffy and fresh.

Signature dishes like the Burrito California, Enchiladas Supreme, Shrimp Cocktail, fajitas, the Carnitas Platter and more have quickly become customer favorites and the full bar offers seasonal cocktails and two-for-one margaritas on Mondays.

Recently, Akers Chief Photographer Nicole Hamel and I visited Cantina's and were delighted.

We tried several dishes, including the Cantina's Sampler Platter—crispy nachos topped with cheese sauce and chicken, a quesadilla, a flauta, guacamole, sour cream and pico de gallo that was almost like a full meal in itself. Still, we kept going with very delicious Birria Tacos and Molcajete, a hot lava mortar filled with beef strips, chicken, pork, shrimp and chorizo topped with cheese, peppers, onions and grilled cactus, all served with rice and beans.



Being from Arizona originally, one may think I've tasted cactus, but this was my first experience, and it was delicious, especially with enough protein in the molcajete to enhance every bite!

My favorite dish of the day, however, was the bone-in ribeye smothered with roasted poblano butter, complete with a side of diced potatoes, zucchini and squash we shared. The dish was paired with an Espresso Martini and a Pineapple Margarita on the rocks we enjoyed every drop of.

The steak was cooked beautifully and the roasted poblano butter added the perfect amount of creamy decadence that I hope didn't translate to added inches to my waistline.

With that said, if you haven't been to Cantina's yet, Cinco de Mayo may be the perfect time to visit. The owners are planning a celebration that includes live mariachis, DJ sets, special drinks, decorations and exclusive T-shirts for customers.

If weekday outings are not your thing, Saturdays Sundays bring a popular brunch from 10am to 2pm featuring hearty Mexican breakfast favorites like chilaquiles, huevos rancheros, avocado toast, bottomless mimosas and more.

Looking to the future, the partners are excited about the next steps in their culinary adventure, including enhancements such as a redesigned patio with enclosures for year-round enjoyment, regardless of weather.

They've also opened Guajillos Taqueria, a second restaurant in Deland to further celebrate their heritage.

"The most important thing that you can do when running a business is not to think like an owner, but like a customer and that's really why I believe this restaurant has been so successful," Ivan says. "We're always thinking, 'What do our customers

need? What are they expecting when it comes to service, quality food, drinks and presentation?'" @



IF
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GO

CANTINA'S MEXICAN KITCHEN

2507 S. Hwy 27, Clermont

352.404.8500

www.cantinas mexican kitchen.com

Dine-in, takeout and children's menu available. Check website for more information and hours.

Let's do lunch or dinner!

→ Tell us about a great restaurant by emailing roxanne@akersmediagroup.com.



ROXANNE BROWN

local DINE eats

From classic diners and lakeside restaurants to fine dining and everything in between, Lake and Sumter counties' culinary scene is booming. Your favorite meal is sure to be served with a side of hospitality.

You can find a copy of Lake & Sumter Style at all listed dining locations!

BUSHNELL

Beef 'O' Brady's
2586 W. CR 48
352.568.7000

Darrell's Diner
2237 W. CR 48
352.444.2318

CLERMONT

Akina Sushi Bar & Asian Fusion Bistro
4300 S. US Hwy. 27
352.243.8988

Ay Jalisco
580 Hwy. 50
352.243.1360

Cheeser's Palace Café
707 W. Montrose St.
352.404.9431

Crooked Spoon Gastropub
200 Citrus Tower Blvd.
352.404.7808

Gator's Dockside
1200 Oakley Seaver Dr.
352.242.1825

Goomba's Pizzeria
2395 S. Hwy. 27
352.989.4403

Green Mountain Pizza
303 Hwy. 50
352.432.3380

Guru Indian Restaurant
2400 S. Hwy. 27 Ste. 101
352.241.9884

Oak Wood Smokehouse & Grill
230 Citrus Tower Blvd.
352.394.0036

Robata Japanese Steak House & Sushi Bar
1500 Oakley Seaver Dr.
352.404.9688

Sarah's Greek Cuisine & More
16640 Cagan Crossings Blvd., Ste. 305
352.404.8031

Yummis Frozen Yogurt and Cafe
650 8th St.
352.243.4529

EUSTIS

Gators Dockside
15241 US Hwy. 441
352.357.1255

Stavro's & Sons of Eustis
2100 W. CR 44
352.589.9100

Taki's Pizza House
1600 S. Bay St.
352.357.0022

The Troff
936 N. Bay St.
352.357.9939

Tony's Pizza & Subs
2760 E. Orange Ave.
352.589.9001

FRUITLAND PARK

Stavro's
3223 US Hwy. 441
352.315.0028

The Rose Plantation
200 Rose Ave.
352.805.4340

GROVELAND

Red Wing Restaurant
12500 S. SR 33
352.429.2997

Barrels & Boards
7965 SR 50 A500
352.557.5007

HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS

JB Boondocks Bar & Grill
704 S. Lakeshore Blvd.
352.324.3600

Mission Inn's La Hacienda Restaurant
10400 CR 48
352.324.3910

Mission Inn's Nicker's Clubhouse Restaurant
10400 CR 48
352.324.2718

LADY LAKE

Ay Sonora Mexican Cuisine
989 US Hwy. 27
352.561.4086

Bamboo Bistro
700 US Hwy. 441
352.750.9998

Blu Spoon Frozen Yogurt
704 US Hwy. 441
352.775.4078

El Ranchito
1 Lagrande Blvd.
352.750.3335

Gators Dockside
1004 Main St.
352.430.1377

Harbor Hills Country Club
6538 Lake Griffin Rd.
352.753.7000

Latin Flavors Bar & Grill
13769 US Hwy. 441
352.561.4002

Marco's Pizza
13721 US Hwy. 441
352.775.1500

Oak Wood Smokehouse & Grill
860 S. Hwy. 27/441
352.751.5640

Takis Greek and Italian Restaurant
13761 N. US Hwy. 441
352.430.3630

LEESBURG

Brooklyn's Pizzeria
27405 US Hwy. 27
352.728.2020

Cousin Vinnie's Family Sports Restaurant
10700 US Hwy. 441
352.253.2442

Donut King
708 S. 14th St.
352.805.4888

El Ranchito Mexican Cuban Restaurant
911 W. North Blvd.
352.460.0123

Great Chicago Fire Brewery & Tap Room
311 W. Magnolia St.
352.474.2739

HP Grill
1403 S. 14th St.
352.314.0006

Ichiban Buffet
10301 US Hwy. 441
352.728.6669

Kawachi Sushi & Bar
10601 US Hwy. 441, Ste. C12
352.431.3449

La Palma Mexican Grill
1690 Citrus Blvd.
352.323.1444

Luna Azul
1341 S. 14th St.
352.805.4174

McCracken's Irish Pub
719 W. Main St.
352.460.0659

Mystic Ice Cream
314 W. Main St.
352.812.1366

Naples Italian Restaurant
1107 W. North Blvd.
352.323.1616

Oak Wood Smokehouse & Grill
27745 US Hwy. 27
352.435.4633

Prime 3 on Main
610 W. Main St.
352.314.0015

Rodello's Italian Restaurant
26736 US Hwy. 27
352.319.8093

Ski Beach
21 Dozier Cir.
352.973.0793

The Brick & Barrel Public House
209 W. Main St.
352.431.3069

The Coffee Snob
1101 W. North Blvd.
352.460.4570

The Old Time Diner
1350 W. North Blvd.
352.805.4250

The Sipping Garden and Bistro
605 W. Magnolia St.
352.460.0716

Wolfy's
918 N. 14th St.
352.787.6777

MOUNT DORA

Barnwood Country Kitchen & Smokehouse
3725 W. Old US Hwy. 441
352.630.4903

Fiesta Grande
421 N. Baker St.
352.385.3540



From bangers to brews, the ultimate UK experience in Mount Dora is always a jolly good time.

The Magical Meat Boutique British Pub has been a Mount Dora favorite for over a decade of delivering an authentic British experience complete with punk music, a red phone booth, HP Sauce and the "Best Fish and Chips in Florida." The kitchen also serves dishes like Scotch eggs, bangers and mash and minty mushy peas, all made with fresh, house-made ingredients. Owners Phil and Kate Barnard insist on using imported beer taps and advanced cooling technology for a perfectly chilled pint every time. The festive atmosphere and indoor/outdoor seating for just over 250 guests create a lively buzz each night with activities like trivia, comedy, live music and English Premier League "footy" matches shown on a giant screen. Call to book a proper tea party or reserve a room for a private celebration. Open 365 days a year, it's a true British experience right in Mount Dora.

➔ **The Magical Meat Boutique Pub** / 322 Alexander St., Mount Dora / 352.729.6911 / mmbpub.com

Magical Meat Boutique

322 N. Alexander St.
352.729.6911

Vincent's Italian Restaurant

5914 Orange Blossom Trl.
352.735.4578

OXFORD

Candelaria Eatery & Café

4059 Thomas St., Unit A01
352.399.2329

Pho Saigon

11717 US Hwy. 301
352.492.9423

TAVARES

Bella Nonna Pizzeria

280 Silverado St.
352.508.9370

BTW (Burgers, Tacos & Waffles)

115 E. Main St.
352.508.9287

Fish Camp Lake Eustis

901 Lake Shore Blvd.
352.742.4400

Hurricane Dockside Grill

3351 W. Burleigh Blvd.
352.508.5137

Puddle Jumpers

111 W. Ruby St.
352.508.5862

Tiki West Raw Bar and Grill

118 W. Ruby St.
352.508.5783

THE VILLAGES

Cody's Roadhouse Brownwood

3731 Meggison Rd.
352.430.2926

Cody's Roadhouse Lake Sumter Landing

1041 Lake Shore Dr.
352.259.8500

Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream

1001 Lake Shore Dr.
352.751.0261

Legacy Restaurant

17135 Buena Vista Blvd.
352.753.1475

Marco's Pizza

5806 Seven Mile Dr., Ste. 101
352.571.2400

NYPD Pizzeria

4046 Wedgewood Ln.
352.750.1994

Peachwave

249 Colony Blvd.
352.750.2238

Peterbrooke Chocolatier

1087 Canal St.
352.391.5877

RJ Gator's Florida Sea Grill & Bar

1015 Lake Shore Dr., #1693
352.751.6935

Roberto's Ristorante Pizzeria

2468 Burnsed Blvd.
352.626.1059

Sakura

265 Colony Blvd.
352.205.7393

TooJays Brownwood

2835 Brownwood Blvd.
352.350.2122

TooJays Lake Sumter Landing

1129 Canal St.
352.430.0410

VKI Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Bar

1004 Old Mill Run
352.259.9887

UMATILLA

The Mason Jar

37534 SR 19
352.589.2535

WILDWOOD

Napolinos

9811 US Hwy. 301
352.399.6825



Brooklyn's Pizzeria & Italian Restaurant

27405 US HWY 27, LEESBURG | 352.728.2020
MYBROOKLYNPIZZERIA.COM

James & Shawna Pancari set out to create an authentic pizzeria reminiscent of those James grew up with in Brooklyn, New York. Together, they've built a loyal following of "pizza snobs" who keep coming back for more! From the moment you walk in, you're immersed in a friendly, inviting atmosphere, with the irresistible aroma of fresh Italian flavors setting the stage for an unforgettable dining experience.

Their commitment to quality is evident in every bite, from hand-tossed, scratch-made dough to freshly sliced veggies and house-made sauces. Each dish is crafted with care and served with pride. Beyond their signature New York-style pizza, the menu boasts a delicious variety of Italian specialties, such as calzones, strombolis, Italian entrées, and appetizers, plus signature sandwiches, salads, wings, and desserts. A well-curated beer and wine selection complements every meal, and gluten-free options ensure there's something for everyone. Stop by for a true taste of Italy—you won't be disappointed!

Mon, Wed, Thur
11:00am - 8:00pm

Friday
11:00am - 9:00pm

Saturday
12:00pm - 9:00pm

Sunday
12:00pm - 8:00pm

Closed Tuesdays

**Live Music on
Thursdays 5p-7p**

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Online orders.**



Guru Indian Restaurant

CLERMONT HILLSIDE TERRACE, 2400 S. U.S. 27, SUITE 101, CLERMONT
352.241.9884 | GURURESTAURANTCLERMONT.COM

Owned by Chef Uday Kadam, Guru has a following of fans who savor the delicious, award-winning Indian cuisine inside the restaurant's beautiful dining room filled with Indian décor and tables with linen tablecloths. Guru earned the prestigious Best Entrée award at the 2021 Taste of South Lake & Business Expo for its Chicken Tikka Masala, featuring boneless chicken pieces cooked in a Tandoor oven with tomato sauce, onion, aromatic herbs, spices, and served with Basmati rice. Guru also has tasty appetizers, Naan breads, vegan dishes, and a wide array of entrees, including Palak Paneer, a dish of homemade cubes of cheese cooked with spinach and fresh spices; Lamb Vindaloo of choice lamb cubes marinated in vinegar with potato and a blend of spices; and Tandoori Chicken Tikka, where the chicken is marinated in mild spices and yogurt. Additionally, Indian alcoholic beverages of Taj Mahal and Kingfisher are served at Guru, and the restaurant caters private functions, parties, and provides many delivery options for orders made online at mygurutogo.com.

Mon - Sat
11:30am - 10:00pm

Sunday
11:30am - 7:00pm



La Palma Mexican Grill

1690 CITRUS BLVD., LEESBURG | 352.323.1444 | LAPALMAGRILL.COM

The entire staff invites you to a delicious dining experience at La Palma Mexican Grill. The recipes used for the restaurant's unique dishes are a blend of old-school traditions from Mexico, combined with culinary inspirations from California and Louisiana. Homemade Mexican entrees such as Tacos Azteca, carnitas, fajitas, Chori Pollo, tamales and more, are flavorful and prepared with only the freshest of ingredients. Sit comfortably in the beautiful dining room, the festive bar, or outside on the patio deck with a serene view of the grounds and of the fun wild animals that can be spotted in the trees. Enjoy fast and friendly service, reasonable prices, three-for-one margaritas all day, every day, and a party room, available by reservation, for large parties or meetings. Full menu at lapalmagrill.com. Call for daily specials.

Open Daily
11:00am - 9:00pm

Lunch Specials
11:00am - 3:00pm

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Prime 3 on Main Steakhouse

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN LEESBURG, 610 W MAIN ST, LEESBURG
352.314.0015 | PRIME3ONMAIN.COM | FACEBOOK: @PRIME3ONMAIN

The dream and concept of three lifelong physicians, Prime 3 on Main is a confluence of American, Asian, and Latin influences in one world-class restaurant. Prime meats, prime rib, skirt steak, and seafood are our specialties. Our filet with black cherry port wine reduction sauce, or the Grouper Fromage, is unique and found nowhere else. Our Casa de Rosado Churrasco is a personal family recipe. Homemade Creme Brûlée and ice cream will complement your meal. Recently given the Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator Magazine as among the world's top wine and food restaurants, Prime 3 on Main has an extensive wine list and caters to small and large groups.



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**Reservations
Strongly
Encouraged**

Closed Sundays

Thursday is Ladies
Night with **\$7.00
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Rodello's Italian Restaurant

26736 U.S. HIGHWAY 27, LEESBURG | 352.319.8093 | RODELLOS.COM

Chef Amadeo Avila invites you to enjoy authentic and fresh Italian cuisine in a friendly, comfortable dining environment at Rodello's Italian Restaurant. The recipes used for his dishes are a blend of old-school traditions from Italy—the restaurant is named for a city in the old country—with new culinary inspirations that Chef Amadeo has learned during many years in the restaurant business. Flavorful, homemade Italian entrees such as Pistachio Crusted Lamb, Salmon Saltimbocca, Lobster Ravioli, Shrimp Risotto, and many others are classics and prepared with only the freshest ingredients. The lunch menu features personal pizzas, calzones, subs, and pasta. Sit in the spacious dining room or enjoy drinks or desserts like delicious gelato in the cozy lounge, which features a full bar, wine menu, and an array of specialty cocktails. Always look for new features on Chef Amadeo's menu, available on the restaurant's website, Rodellos.com.

Open Daily
11:00am - 9:00pm



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2835 BROWNWOOD BLVD., THE VILLAGES | 352.350.2122

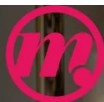
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Mon - Sun
8:00am - 8:00pm

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TOOJAYS.COM





BEHIND THE BAR

PEOPLE

RAISING SPIRITS

Burns Drugstore mixologist conjures up craft cocktails.

STORY: GINA HORAN

PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL



When James Lent handed Katrina Atta the keys to his speakeasy concept a year ago, she embraced the idea with passion and helped turn Burns Drugstore into Leesburg's favorite haunt.

"I wanted to offer a real bespoke experience," the Miami native explains. "I love that the whole neighborhood just evokes history."

Nestled in the back of Marmaduke's Lodge, Burns Drugstore Speakeasy leans into its 1920s aesthetic with gilded accents, plush seating and a menu that straddles the line between classic and clandestine.

Once Katrina starts conjuring up her craft cocktails, the dispersed crowd inevitably gravitates toward her mixing station at the front corner of the bar. Here at the "nerve center," the air becomes laced with the scent of smoked bourbon, citrus, burnt cinnamon or any of the dozens of tinctures and syrups she has made. Each pour, swirl of smoke and perfectly placed garnish is a performance and a

nod to the past wrapped in something entirely new.

A true DIY mixologist, she crafted her own cocktail smoker from an old lamp and scours antique shops for vintage glassware, ensuring that each cocktail is as photogenic as it is potent. She also happily creates non-alcoholic cocktails for those who don't imbibe.

With 16 years behind the bar, the former runway model channels her creative instincts and a few lingering spirits from Leesburg's rowdier past.

"I wanted the mixology to match the memories here," she says. "Historic downtown Leesburg has plenty of both."

Katrina and Burns Drugstore have been fully embraced by both locals and visitors, and mixology classes have become part of the experience. Their recent Art of Bourbon class sold out, proving that Katrina can raise spirits with the best of them. *TM*

Want in? Follow the Burns Drugstore socials and grab the weekly password. Katrina is behind the bar on Fridays and Saturdays.

HURRICANE KATRINA at Burns Drugstore

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 oz. dark rum
- 3/4 oz. banana liqueur
- 1 oz. cranberry juice
- 1/2 lime, juiced
- Pineapple juice
- Lime boat
- Over-proofed rum
- Cinnamon
to sprinkle on top

DIRECTIONS:

Fill a tall glass with ice and add dark rum, banana liqueur, cranberry juice and lime juice. Top with pineapple juice, leaving about an inch of space. Take a hollowed-out lime half and fill it with a shot of overproof rum. Add a banana garnish to the side of the lime boat. Light the overproof rum on fire and carefully sprinkle cinnamon over the flame, taking care not to burn yourself. Enjoy!

Have a favorite mixologist? → Email me at gina@akersmediagroup.com and tell us which bartender stirs your drinks.



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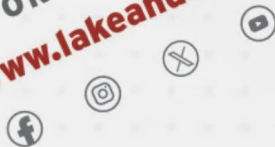
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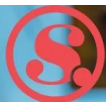
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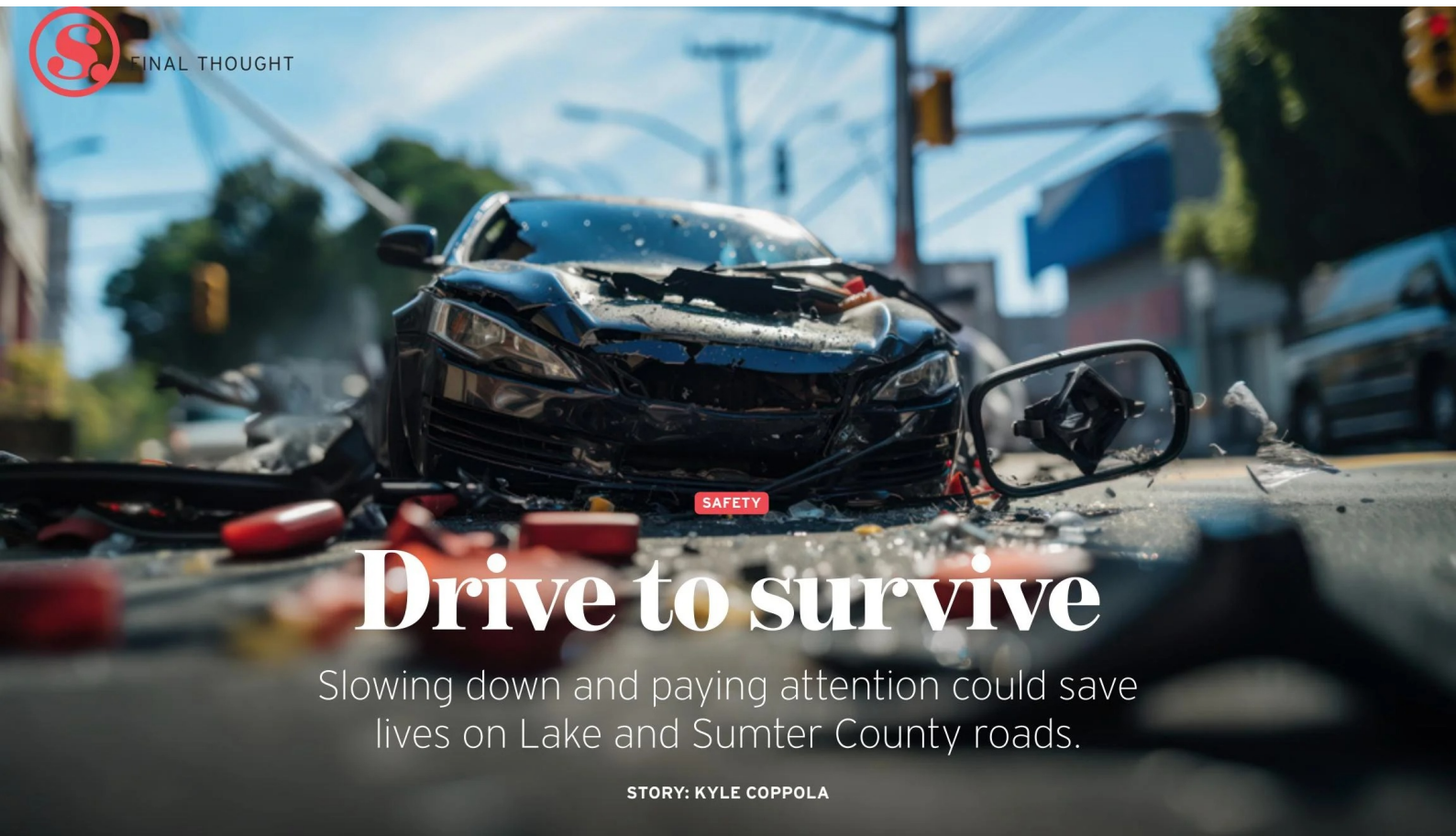
HOSTED BY KYLE COPPOLA

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FINAL THOUGHT



SAFETY

Drive to survive

Slowing down and paying attention could save lives on Lake and Sumter County roads.

STORY: KYLE COPPOLA

This year, Lake and Sumter counties have seen a heartbreaking number of fatal and near fatal accidents. These aren't just numbers on a police report—they are people whose lives were cut short and whose loved ones now face a void that will never be filled. The reasons behind these accidents are disturbingly common: speeding, distracted driving, impaired driving and failure to yield. These are behaviors we all know are dangerous, yet they persist, creating chaos on roads that are increasingly busy due to the influx of residents moving to our area. The question we must ask ourselves as a community is simple: How many more lives need to be lost before we collectively decide to slow down, pay attention and prioritize safety?

In 2023, Florida saw over 3,000 traffic fatalities statewide according to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. While Lake and Sumter counties may not be the most populous areas in the state, they are not immune to the rising dangers of the road. Rapid population growth, increased tourism and the rise of new developments mean more cars on the road—and more opportunities for accidents.

We must start by acknowledging that safety is a shared responsibility. Every driver has the power to reduce their risk and the risk to others simply by following basic road rules. This means driving the speed limit, avoiding distractions like texting, yielding the right of way, and, of course, never driving under the influence. These aren't just good habits—they are lifesaving practices.

We also need to rethink how we view driving itself. For too many people, getting behind the wheel

is a mindless routine rather than the serious, potentially dangerous task that it is. Every moment on the road requires full attention. A single lapse in focus—a glance at a phone, a rushed turn—can result in irreversible consequences.

Beyond policy and enforcement, what Lake and Sumter counties need most is a cultural shift. Driving shouldn't be seen as a race to get from point A to point B, but rather as a responsibility we all share. It's about valuing every life on the road, whether it's your own, your passengers' or the strangers in the cars around you.

This isn't just a message for drivers. Cyclists, pedestrians and even passengers play a role in advocating for road safety. Speak up when someone is speeding or texting behind the wheel. Follow traffic laws whether you're walking, biking or riding. Our roads are shared by all, and it's up to each of us to keep them safe. 🚗

Hey, readers! Is there a particular subject that you would like me to write a commentary about? → Tell me, via email, at kyle@akersmediagroup.com.



KYLE COPPOLA



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Paul Mahle, MD

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